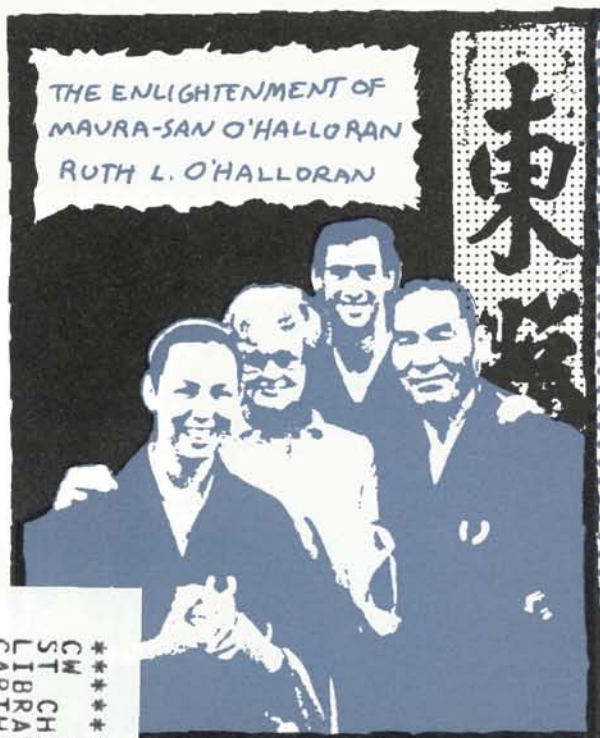
St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

$2.00 February 28, 1992

COMMONWEAL



THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF MAURA-SAN O'HALLORAN
RUTH L. O'HALLORAN

COMIC RELIEF
FRANK McCONNELL

THE CHOICE IN 'CHOOSE LIFE'
SCOTT AARON

JUST CAUSE
J. BRYAN HEHIR

QUINDLEN'S CHURCH
PAUL BAUMANN

THE CHARACTER ISSUE
WILLIAM G. MAYER

BOOKS

CALLAHAN
HE END OF THE
WAR

ARD BLAKE ON
Y PAT KELLY'S
TIN SCORSESE

ES T. FISHER ON
STRANGE WEATHER

RELIGIOUS
BOOK NOTES:
LAWRENCE S.
CUNNINGHAM

MOLLY FINN ON MAUS: A SURVIVOR'S TALE

**********3-DIGIT 458
CW 00079972
ST CHARLES SEMINARY
LIBRARY
CARTHAGENA STA
CELINA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Hold that baby!

Newport, R.I.

To the Editors: Neville Braybrooke's "A Christmas Alphabet" [December 20, 1991] was a charming piece. And I loved the sketch of the Old Year lovingly holding the baby New Year in his inexpert arms. That baby is going to slip right through; no support under his little bottom. And ain't that the truth? ADE BETHUNE

Be fair to Bush

Huntington, N.Y.

To the Editors: Your offer to extend Mario Cuomo's subscription to *Commonweal* four more years if he runs for president is indeed generous ["Mario...Please," January 17]. You should now make the same offer to George Bush, provided he pledges *not* to run. Meantime, keep nudging Cuomo. THOMAS F. MADER

Charismatic celibacy

Heidelberg, Germany

To the Editors: With reference to the exchange of views on the question of married priests ["Ecclesia Semper Reformanda," October 11, 1991], I am a priest, age ninety-six years. I wish and hope for abrogation of the legal requirement of priestly celibacy in favor of voluntary and charismatic celibacy. But much that is being done against the ecclesiastical order, partly without the bishops' knowledge, partly with their tolerance, is a cancerous affliction of the church. Faithful courage is required on the part of both the church's leaders and her sacred people. (REV.) ALFONS BEIL

Theology issue: Great!

Kent, Conn.

To the Editors: The January 31 issue of *Commonweal* is *splendid*. William Shea's piece is clear, helpful, and irenic. James Parker on Christiane Brusselmans moved me to tears. Then Lawrence Cunningham's reviews—always helpful. Thanks for all your labors week after week.

BROTHER AELRED SETON

Theology issue: Slanted!

Summit, N.J.

To the Editors: Leo Strauss once wrote that Jerusalem represents revelation; Athens, wonder. He said that one admires both and wonders which to choose—and by that very wonder one chooses Athens.

In the same way, William Shea ["Dual Loyalties in Catholic Theology," January 31] describes two approaches to theology, one favoring free conversation among many human experiences; another, obedience to an enduring tradition. Mr. Shea urges us to converse about the two approaches—and thereby prejudges the discussion. WILLIAM M. PETERSEN

Theology issue: Onward!

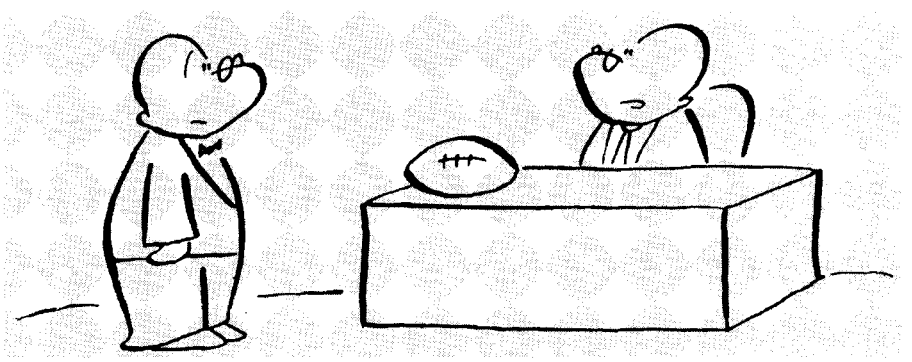
New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Congratulations on producing an issue [January 31] with really first-rate reflections on the dialogue between theology and the world. I am stimulated enough to wish to advance the argument further.

William Shea raises the question of a specifically Catholic theology's use of materials from the wider culture, for instance, current philosophical understandings, political analysis, or cultural matters such as "New Age" thinking. But, as he knows, such appropriations are not unique to our century. Aristotelian or neo-Platonic language forms a large part of the traditional Christian vocabulary of theology; the influence of Roman and medieval political forms on the development and shape of the papacy should be obvious; and no appropriation of "New Age" symbolism is more extreme than, for instance, the European Christian appropriation of mistletoe and fir trees at Christmastime.

Given these facts, the objections of Cardinal Ratzinger and others to such appropriations *now* are based, not on the fact that they are foreign to Catholic traditions, but rather that they are new. This is a different issue. It may be that some of the new material is inimical to Catholic or generally Christian faith, but one cannot point to its source outside the Catholic tradition as evidence against it without calling into question

(Continued on page 30)



"Ferguson, how are you at blocking?"

Commonweal, is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1992 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $36; Canada, $39; foreign, $41. Special two-year rate: U.S., $62; Canada, $66; foreign, $72. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, pp. 11, 19, 21, Antonucci; cover art, p. 23, *Maus II*, by Art Spiegelman, Pantheon Books; p. 2, Shiong; pp. 5, 28, Charlot; p. 6, Turtil; p. 15, Derrick Santini, *Howard's End*, Orion; p. 27, Ross, Rothco.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXIX, Number 4

Correspondence	2
Editorials	3
An editor's notebook: *Paul Baumann*	4
Do you take this man...?: *William G. Mayer*	5
Whose world is rougher?: *Michael Chapman*	7
Just cause? Yes: *J. Bryan Hehir*	8
None of the above: *John Garvey*	9
In twenty-seven short years: *Ruth L. O'Halloran*	11
Poetry: *Kendall Le Compte*	12
Bruce Ducker	22
The choice in 'choose life': *Scott Aaron*	15
Screen: *Richard Alleva*	18
Stage: *Gerald Weales*	20
Media: *Frank McConnell*	21

BOOKS

Maus—A Survivor's Tale, I & II: *Molly Finn*	23
The Turn—From a Cold War to a New Era: *David Callahan*	24
Martin Scorsese: *Richard Blake*	25
Strange Weather: *James T. Fisher*	26
Religious booknotes: *Lawrence S. Cunningham*	28

STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Associate Editor: Paul Baumann
Production Editor: Jacqueline Dowdell
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Movies: Richard Alleva
Stage: Gerald Weales
Media: Frank McConnell
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr.
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen Alava, Pamela Quatse
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas, New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Democracy interdicted

The policy that has led to thousands of Haitian refugees being returned to their homeland by U.S. Coast Guard ships is a moral and political outrage. The Bush administration and the Supreme Court have denied the refugees succor and temporary asylum. We are forcing these people back to a land ruled by thugs who wait for us to turn our backs. (Amnesty International reports that 1,500 people have perished in Haiti since the September ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide; the UN reports that a number of those repatriated were specially targeted by the army and the police.) The United States has declared the government of Haiti a band of outlaws, yet we send the asylum-seekers home to their fate with little more than a bag of clothes and wave of the hand. We are moving in the wrong direction.

Of course, the facts are complex. Of course, not every Haitian who sets out for Miami is a bona fide political refugee. Of course, not all the policies of Aristide were models of the democratic process. But these facts remain: the Aristide government was violently overthrown by the Haitian military, which resisted his reforms at every turn; this usurper government continues to torture and murder those who oppose it; the Bush administration's response has proven to be fainthearted, inadequate, and misdirected.

In September the U.S. strongly condemned the coup and gave firm support to the Organization of American States and its call for an embargo of Haiti. With time, that resolve has dwindled on both the political and the humanitarian fronts. The State Department seems to have thrown in the towel on Aristide, a man they disliked from the first but were forced to work with after his overwhelming victory in Haiti's first democratic election. Since the coup, U.S. Ambassador Alvin P. Andrews, Jr., has been vigorous in trying to impose a U.S.-dictated settlement, one that, at its best, would return Aristide as a figurehead saddled with a prime minister not of his own choosing or views. Twenty-one senators and deputies of the Haitian Parliament have written to their counterparts in the U.S. Congress protesting Andrews's meddling and his "openly hostile attitude" to reaching a settlement. "Why is he taking actions in complete disregard to [our] 1987 Constitution, particularly Article 137, regarding the choice of prime minister by president of the republic?" they inquired. Bishop Willy Romulus of Jeremie, head of the Haitian bishops' Justice and Peace Commission, was no less candid: "The OAS has come to Haiti several times since the crisis began to seek a solution," he wrote, "but it seems that of the thirty-four nations which form this organization, only one is in charge." And, he continued, "the representative [Ambassador Andrews] of that powerful country dictates his every whim."

Then there are the humanitarian issues. Here we should be reminded of Graham Greene's warning that "it has always been in the interest of the state...to restrict human sympathy. It makes government easier." Immediately following the September

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coup, the U.S. began returning fleeing refugees. The *Miami Herald* reported in November that 433 boats had been intercepted and over 23,000 Haitians repatriated since the coup. Appeal to federal district courts brought by human rights groups forced a temporary stay to this policy of interdiction. In January the Supreme Court allowed the U.S. government to begin transporting the refugees home again. There is among most Americans, however, a sense of amazement, almost of disbelief, over what is happening. Mayor Xavier Suarez of Miami, himself a refugee from Cuba, has made the point with ample clarity: "How could I not be in [the refugees'] favor if I was accepted here thirty-one years ago and the whole world extended a hand to me and my family?"

What, then, is to be done? The Haitians deserve temporary refugee status until the legitimate government of Haiti has been reinstated in accord with UN and OAS resolutions. The law providing President George Bush with such authority is already on the books. It only needs his directive to be activated. If he will not act, Congress should enact specific legislation to deal with the situation to force his hand. Facilities to house the refugees are available, not only at the Guantanamo base but in Florida, a majority of whose citizens favor welcoming the Haitians. All we lack is the will. Other governments in the hemisphere, albeit on a much smaller scale, have shown a willingness to take the Haitian refugees and have done so. They can only be discouraged by our current example. Furthermore, to give sanctuary makes a clear statement to Haiti's colonels that their coup will not be accommodated.

To convince Port-au-Prince that Aristide must be reinstated, the OAS economic embargo has to be strengthened, not gutted. (In early February, under pressure from a lobby led by former Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, the Bush administration weakened the embargo, saying that it had put too many *Americans* out of work. This on-again, off-again policy, dictated by American business interests, is a prescription for failure. As OAS Secretary General Joao Baena Soares remarked following the administration's action, "This is not going to help.")

Rather than abandoning the embargo, it must be more precisely targeted. Since military intervention, even of a collective kind, is at present an unlikely option, proper sanctions and increased diplomatic pressure remain the surest way of returning Haiti's popularly elected government. Admittedly, this will not be an easy course. A stringent embargo, enforced by U.S. military personnel, would impose even greater sufferings on Haiti's poor. Still, by exempting humanitarian assistance and then directing it to the poor; by cutting off military supplies and smugglers' routes; and by freezing the assets of the elite who are convinced they can wait out the embargo, the prospect of Aristide's return would be improved. The junta has threatened to cut off the return of refugees if the U.S. imposes stricter sanctions. It is clear where the shoe pinches.

As the attempted coup in Venezuela indicates, every time a democratic government is threatened in the hemisphere, shock waves pass through the region. The lingering crisis in Haiti and its neglect by Washington invite adventurers elsewhere. Washington must send a different message: Democracy now.

ET CETERA

UPDATE Remember "A Christmas Revelation"—the one Associate Editor Paul Baumann wrote about in the December 20, 1991 issue? It was about the perils and possibilities of another little Baumann. Rachel Zoë Baumann arrived on January 7, 1992; not quite a Christmas revelation, but close. Mother, daughter, and sibs are doing fine; father still dazed.

FROM THE EDITORS "Notebook" has appeared since our first issue of 1992. We rename it in this issue "An Editor's Notebook" to make clear its purpose and our intent in publishing it. Not every subject of passionate interest to the editors is editorial fodder, and there are some subjects on which there are more opinions than editors—hard to believe, we know!

Our remedy: signed opinion pieces by members of the editorial staff reflecting our personal views. In our January 17 issue, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels virtually begged Mario Cuomo in the first Notebook to join the presidential race. No answer yet, but stay tuned. In the next issue Patrick Jordan showed why both pacifists and just-war theorists could take only cold comfort from an editorial in *La Civiltá Cattolica* on the Gulf War. Then Robert Hoyt took on the vexed question of the Catholic and her conscience in a look at recent announcements that the use of artificial contraception is a barrier to the reception of Holy Communion.

And in this issue: Well, look for yourself (on page 5). Could it be that Anna Quindlen and Paul Baumann are both right? And why does Mr. Baumann now insist on wearing a hat in the office?

THE JOYS OF SUBWAY RIDING Yes, there are. Including subway conductors' patter, especially during rush hour, e.g.: "If you're going to sardine it, don't block the doors and take up every available amount of space."

IT JUST SO HAPPENED that after a long afternoon of communal fretting over the financial future of this magazine one of its editors wearily answered the phone. "Commonweal," he said with false good-cheer.

"I'm making out my will," announced a rather robust woman's voice at the other end of the line. "Yesssssss," the editor nervously, and somewhat agnostically, responded. "Now do I make it out to the Associates?" the woman continued. "Or to the, ah, what is it called, the Commonweal Foundation?"

"The Foundation," the editor gingerly informed her. "That's 15 Dutch Street, right?" "That's right." "And that will see the magazine continues?" "Yes it will." "Well ok then." "Well, thank you very much." "You're very welcome," answered the anonymous benefactor.

A true story.

That's 15 Dutch Street, New York, NY 10038

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AN EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

ANNA QUINDLEN'S CHURCH

OBJECTIONS FROM A MAD HATTER

I find Anna Quindlen to be a remarkably representative liberal figure, and never more so than when expatiating on the future of Catholicism. Alexander M. Santora's interview with the *New York Times*'s popular columnist (*Commonweal*, February 14) reminded me how engaging and infuriating she can be. Quindlen's "brain wave" notion of resurrection, her congregational ecclesiology, and her wholly personalist morality, especially her views on abortion—all expounded in the interview—seem an idiosyncratic Catholicism, to say the least. For Quindlen to pronounce so unambiguously on the nature of the true church as it is manifest in her heroes the Reverend Charles Curran and Archbishop Rembert Weakland (good men, to be sure) is about as quirky as the perpetual sightings of the BVM in Bayside, Queens.

Quindlen's description of the social change she experienced growing up in her Irish-Italian family in the sixties was revealing. Her simple but effective image, that of no longer having to wear a hat at Mass, is meant to suggest how far Catholics have come from the putative nonsense and authoritarianism of the immigrant church. "For me," says Quindlen, "the sixties were the beginning of this staid sense of a fault line in all kinds of established institutions and extended families....The fault line has now given us an entirely, radically different society...in terms of the roles of women, the roles of the church, the roles of the community and family."

Fair enough; that is certainly the world in which we all live. However, Quindlen seems to assume that our liberation from the liturgical and moral pieties of the past—"I have no wish to resurrect any of those forms or rituals"—has enabled us to embrace a more authentic Christianity. She reiterates the world's weariest cliché, that modern Catholics belong to "a church of choice," one that is "much healthier than the old strictly obligatory church."

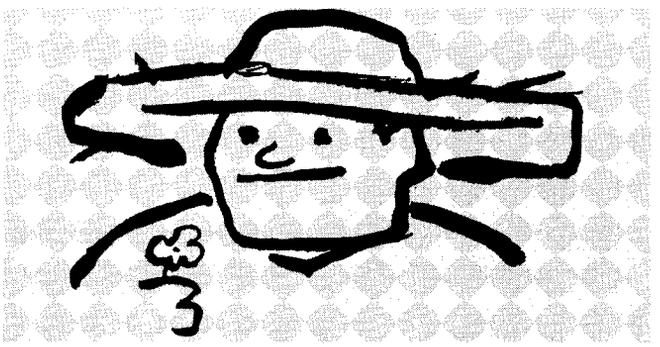
Healthier by what measure and to what end? Quindlen seems to equate choice with health; the more choice you have the healthier you are. But that is merely tautological. Does our emphasis on choice mean we are any more successful than our grandparents in acknowledging the social influences on belief? I doubt it. I would be very much surprised if the spectrum of opinion among Quindlen's fellow '74 Barnard graduates on abortion, on what constitutes success, or on the nature of marriage, is any wider than the spectrum of opinion on those same questions among the Italians of her ancestral South Philadelphia. This largely uncritical veneration of choice leaves out a good deal of human experience, and disguises how much we benefit from opportunities not earned but provided for us.

Doubtless we have shed the piety of the past, but whether that is an emancipation or whether we have merely exchanged custom for the empty iconoclasm of popular culture is the nagging question. Religious sensibilities inhere in specific social contexts. That's another way of saying you can't have a Catholic faith without a Catholic culture. If you invest authenticity and ultimate authority in the values of secularism, you get secularism, not an enlightened Catholicism. Judaism's instinct for separatism is basically sound; to preserve your God you must preserve the cult (*lex orandi, lex credendi*). In embracing the moral and social categories of secularism—the meritocracy, the ultimately subjective nature of morality—perhaps we have only smuggled into the church the seeds of the alienation that pervades modern life.

The sixties were a time of unparalleled economic opportunity and social mobility for Catholics. The old neighborhoods and extended families broke up, and with them the old matter-of-fact allegiances. That this loosening of social ties would be replicated in religious practice and belief should not surprise anyone, although Quindlen seems to suggest that the evolution of more liberal Catholic attitudes toward conscience and institutional loyalty is the extension of civilization to once heathen lands. "The church of the people," she asserts, "in some ways has never been stronger because the church of the people is a church of choice."

I think that a very sentimental notion. Where reformers go wrong is in their dogmatic adherence to this subjective understanding of religious obligation. Quindlen's disregard for symbols of communal conformity and of traditional authority—"I see very clearly in America now that there are two Catholic churches: the church of the people and the church of the hierarchy"—is entirely too pat. Her notion of moral authority seems to depend, not on the covenanted and sacramental values of the Catholic tradition, but on the contractual and individualistic assumptions of contemporary American culture.

But can the values of "choice"—absolute autonomy, personal achievement, and materialistic salvation—be superimposed on a church that has always seen the self in communitarian terms and whose sacramental integrity is so at odds with the anemic positivism of our times? Requiring women to wear hats in church may be seen as a superstition or an example of patriarchal excess. But, I would argue, such a view blinds one to the elegance and utility of symbolic actions, and to how such nonverbal gestures feed into a larger symbolic language. After all, isn't "holy" water a little primitive, and bead counting a bit infantile? Indeed, why bother with this stuff at all? Shouldn't we all be out working with the poor?



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Given the kind of qualms Quindlen has about old Catholic forms and rituals, how can she accommodate the extravagant symbolism that locates God in a particular piece of bread and cup of wine? Why keep that old—and most "obligatory"—form when discarding the rest? I am not saying that women have to keep their heads covered in order to believe in the Real Presence. But I am saying that the Eucharist cannot survive outside a rich (I don't mean rococo) symbolic vocabulary, and that dismissing the coherence and beauty of those forms and rituals, including a hierarchical polity, is a sure symptom of a deepening insensibility to Catholicism's defining doctrine.

Quindlen goes out of her way to laud the church as a social-service agency. "Its sole mission seems to be to keep alive the teachings of Jesus," she says. But Catholicism's claims have always been more fantastic—in both senses of the word—than that. This movement away from symbolic action to ethics and philanthropy represents a fatal diminishment of sacramental faith. An unfashionable belief in the efficacy of symbolic action remains Roman Catholicism's distinctive—and most lovable—feature. As *Lumen gentium* succinctly states, the church is "the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery." Quindlen seems embarrassed by such claims to truth or authority, and takes refuge in a "personal" relationship with Jesus while enthroning the superiority of good works over symbolic actions.

Moreover, it is not what Christ taught, but who Christ is that constitutes the quintessential "mission" and meaning of the church. The modern world is filled with moralists, from hunger strikers to exuberant free-market maximizers to stern feminists. What the modern world abhors, and what the church defiantly embodies, is the reality of mystery—the mystery of human nature and destiny, and the mystery of God's presence in this world. In short, although I feel free to dispute the validity of the prohibition against contraception, the rule of priestly celibacy, and the practice of meat-filled Fridays, I think traditional forms should be strengthened, not abandoned. I think it self-evident that Catholicism cannot coherently reconstitute itself—as the church of choice, or the People of God, or the New Jerusalem—in the whirlwind of modernity if deprived of those forms. Modernity will win every time.

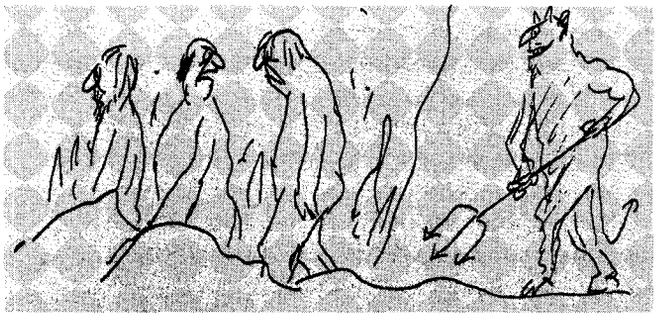
PAUL BAUMANN

THE CHARACTER ISSUE

DO YOU TAKE THIS MAN...?

VOTERS & VOWS

What effect will the issue of marital infidelity actually have on Governor Bill Clinton's candidacy? As I write (about a week before the New Hampshire primary), the verdict in most press accounts is that he seems to have been successful in his damage-control efforts. But things are volatile. His support in the New Hampshire polls dipped briefly right after the tabloid revelation of Gennifer Flowers was publicized, and then rebounded several days later. News interviews with "typical voters" suggest that they don't care one way or another; and many political commentators have decided that this is the public's final verdict on the matter.



"Sure you had good intentions. We all *had good intentions!"*

It could be that by the time this article appears, New Hampshire voters will have concurred in that judgment. I think it's too soon to say. When accused of some personal indiscretion, a candidate's first line of defense has usually been a self-righteous declaration that such accusations are a distraction from the real purpose of an election campaign, which is to talk about policy issues. No matter how appealing this sounds on first hearing, it is seriously misleading. In the November presidential election, we will be choosing between two individuals whose characters and personalities have important implications for how they will perform in office. Even in the very best circumstances, campaign policy discussions are only a rough guide to the actual decisions that a president will make once in office. Indeed, in looking back over the last three decades of American politics, one is struck by the fact that many of the most conspicuous presidential failures (at least in the eyes of public opinion) had less to do with policy (at least of the kind discussed in campaigns) than with the personal failings of the presidents: Johnson's stubbornness; Nixon's paranoia and dishonesty; Carter's lack of leadership ability; Reagan's "management style."

The more difficult quandary comes when we ask about the relevance of any particular trait to presidential performance. There are too many attributes of character and personality to talk about them in an intelligent and useful way. Most reporters don't know enough about the candidates to make reliable judgments. Party leaders once played this role; they knew the major contenders personally and had a generally good sense of how they performed in positions of responsibility. Today, nomination decisions are made by the public, who register their choice in primaries and caucuses. Given the public nature of this process, we are compelled—like it or not—to discuss issues of character and personality.

Once character is admitted as a legitimate issue, there is no way to draw a boundary that declares any one category of behavior off limits, including marital infidelity. The Clintons have acknowledged past marital difficulties, and Bill Clinton has implicitly admitted that infidelity was an issue. He understood the risk before he entered the presidential race. And at least through the New Hampshire campaign, he received generally sympathetic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coverage of the issue from the national media, and few of his Democratic rivals have pressed the issue. But I doubt that such a situation could continue through the election in November.

Let's take a closer look at those public opinion polls that suggest a majority of Americans believe that adultery should not bar a person from the presidency. Typical is an ABC-*Washington Post* poll from late January: "Could you vote for a candidate who had an extramarital affair, or not?" Sixty-nine percent said they could; 28 percent said they could not. Should we conclude the public doesn't care and this is not an issue? If 69 percent aren't bothered by an adulterous candidate, 28 percent say they are. It is very difficult to get 51 percent of the vote in a presidential campaign if your conduct has already alienated more than one-quarter of the electorate.

There are other ways to frame the issue that may make it more relevant to the issue of presidential performance. Voters who are unconcerned about adultery per se may still be persuaded that it has troubling implications for Clinton's honesty and willingness to keep promises, or his consistency and stability, or his commitment to "family values." In an era of family breakdown, when divorce, teen-age pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases have reached unprecedented numbers, it does not seem unreasonable for the voters to ask that a candidate who will become the single most visible symbol of American government be capable of sexual discretion and self-control.

Whatever they may say to pollsters, voters have had troubling questions raised about Clinton. It may be that they will resolve those doubts in Clinton's favor. But he has become a considerably more vulnerable candidate than he was two months ago. Any new doubts (like the one raised about his draft deferment) seem that much more credible despite his respectable defense; they become part of a body of "evidence" that Clinton is somehow an untrustworthy person to put in the White House.

On one issue there should be no doubt: Though U.S. sexual mores have changed since the mid-1960s, most Americans still draw a line on what happens after a couple exchange marriage vows. Between 1969 and 1987, the percentage of Americans who felt that premarital sex was not wrong jumped from 21 percent to 48 percent. During almost the same time period, opposition to adultery actually may have increased; in 1991, 75 percent of the adult population felt that extramarital sex was "always wrong"; only 3 percent said it was "not wrong at all."

Over the last three decades, the Democrats' most persistent problem in presidential elections has been their position on social and cultural issues such as race, crime, religion, abortion, and patriotism. Their stance has turned off many working-class voters who might otherwise have supported Democratic policies on the economy. To nominate a candidate with Clinton's history will almost certainly guarantee that such issues will continue to plague the Democrats this fall and hinder their efforts to make the campaign a referendum on George Bush's handling of the economy.

WILLIAM G. MAYER

William G. Mayer is an assistant professor of political science at Northeastern University, Boston. His book The Changing American Mind *will be published in August by the University of Michigan Press.*

REPORT FROM #98764

WHOSE WORLD IS ROUGHER?

LIFE BEHIND BARS

For a long time now, I have been asking myself this question: Is it rougher in here, or out there? Yes, I am in prison, serving life without parole, probation, or suspension of sentence. Sounds sort of final, doesn't it? In Louisiana, it is.

When I first got arrested, a kid asked, "Is it really as rough as they say?" I got to thinking about that. Maybe you can help answer. Let's compare worlds and see.

You worry about being robbed? If I go to the commissary, like you go to the store, I stand in a long line, just like you. On my way back to the dorm, someone pulls a knife, and takes my groceries. I just got robbed, just like you. Except that I cannot carry cash money.

You worry about getting burglarized? If I had some street clothes, radio, etc., in my locker, things that are valued here, someone could break into my locker and take it all. Just like you, I've been burglarized.

You worry about being mugged? If I had a nice watch, expensive belt buckle, or boots or tennis shoes, I could be in the rest room, or on the yard, get jumped on, and they would take all that. Just like you, I've just been mugged.

You worry about being kidnapped? Several prisons have had riots, where inmates were held hostage.

You worry about being raped? Statistics show that one out of every seven inmates is raped in prison. I have seen some, out of sheer desperation, loneliness, and all, turn to someone to fill that need and become someone's "wife." It is not uncommon. Out of desperation, they sell themselves. Just like you, loneliness and desperation won. Some will become prostitutes as well. Even in prison.

Of course, I do not have to worry about things like drunk drivers or a drug-crazed maniac running loose with a machine gun—a machete, yes; machine gun, no. Some things are more important to some than others, like a man having his good word. If his word is no good, he is no good. Not telling everything, sticking to the "Code," things like that.

Let's look at nicer things. You work for minimum wages. I get .02 cents an hour. Can you survive on that? You pay taxes, I pay sales taxes. You go to the movies, I go to the TV room. You go to the park, I go out on the yard. Is there really any difference? Not much, but some. I cannot sleep with my wife, if I was to be married. I cannot play with kids, which is something I dearly miss. I cannot go to the mall and just hang out, or go for a drive in the country.

Why then, you ask yourself, is there a term "hardened" criminal? That is easy to explain, but really hard to avoid becoming. The key word is hatred. They let it build, until it will consume

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them. First, they hate because they are in prison. All the world they knew has been cut off. Then, they have to survive on .02 cents an hour, so they do not have anything to their name. Family forgets them. Wife divorces them. The loneliness and desperation add to the hatred. Plus, they are told when to get up, when to go to bed, forced to do some very hard labor. Add to that having to deal with a cold, callous, uncaring prison system, and a judicial system more interested in the money. Having to put up with guards that take pleasure in creating as much chaos as possible. It turns a spark into an uncontrollable raging blaze. The hatred builds and builds, until they can no longer do anything but hate. They become calloused and uncaring themselves. They literally hate everything. Hence, the definition of a "hardened" criminal. The easiest thing to become, the hardest to avoid. But, people on the outside can, just as easy, become "hardened" toward society. Just like you, again.

So, just whose world is rougher, yours or mine? A very good question, huh?

MICHAEL CHAPMAN

Michael Chapman is serving a life sentence for murder at the Louisiana State Prison, Camp J Bass, in Angola, Louisiana.

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

JUST CAUSE? YES

JUST MEANS? TOO SOON TO SAY

January 1992, in striking contrast to a year ago, was a month dominated by domestic politics in the United States. Last year the riveting congressional debate on the decision to go to war in the Persian Gulf was the center of attention. This year the quadrennial pilgrimage of presidential candidates to New Hampshire not only focused attention on the process of domestic politics, it also impelled the candidates to proclaim that it was time to put foreign policy in its place. The appropriate place varied a bit from Pat Buchanan to Jerry Brown, but the common theme was to locate international issues far down on the scale of priorities.

In spite of this deflation of foreign-policy issues, it was also the case that January 1992 was a month of retrospective review of the Gulf War. A year later, distant from the pressures of patriotism and the flush of victory, substantial attention was given to an assessment of both the strategy and the ethics of the Gulf War. While the election will understandably not be decided by these questions, the review of the war deserves attention for two reasons. First, there are unanswered questions from the past, and, second, there are precedents which may be set for the future. For both political and moral reasons the questions of the past should be pressed until they are answered, and the precedents should be scrutinized before they are given political or moral legitimacy for the future.

The dominant issue of the postwar period remains the assessment of Iraqi casualties—both military and civilian. The importance of this issue lies in the way the morality of war was debated. While there was extended debate from August 1990 through January 1991 on whether the United States and its allies (gathered under the umbrella of the UN Security Council) should go to war, the intensity and brevity of the war made debate about the tactics and strategy almost impossible. In addition to the rapidity of the war, the significant restrictions on coverage by the press added to the difficulty of assessing the tactics of the war as it was being conducted. The debate on "just means," therefore, has been a post-factum assessment. This does not at all diminish its significance. Every war yields its "lessons" which are imprinted on the psychology of leaders and citizens, and which in turn become the presumptive rules by which the next debate about the use of force is structured. The lessons of Munich led to policies about Vietnam, whose lessons —we are now told—have been revised by the Gulf. In brief, the argument the next time may well be that the Gulf War shows that power can be used with strategic effectiveness (we win) and moral discrimination (we are justified in winning). The post-factum debate about "just means" in the Gulf may go a long way toward determining how the next post-cold-war decision about the use of force is debated and decided.

Three dimensions of the means-debate remain open: the facts about casualties, the principles used to assess the facts, and questions about how principles should be applied. The facts about Iraqi casualties are still in dispute. The Iraqi government has never published a detailed accounting of civilian and combatant casualties, and the U.S. government thus far has been particularly circumspect about civilian casualties in Iraq. In the wider public debate several estimates of casualty figures are circulating, but the first step in a more precise ethical assessment of the war requires a better empirical consensus on data than we now have.

The evaluation of the means question involves, of course, the two principles of discrimination and proportionality. The discrimination or noncombatant-immunity principle was the center of attention during the conflict. Given the historical propensities of air campaigns to violate this norm, it was significant that in official briefings from Washington and the Gulf much effort was invested in demonstrating how noncombatant immunity was being observed. At the level of *intention* the allied policy seems to have met the demands of the discrimination principle. This means that in targeting policy, and in rules of engagement for pilots, the public record indicates serious efforts to avoid direct attacks on civilians. The one exception to this positive evaluation was an article in the *Washington*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Post in June 1991 which described a strategy in which the targets hit were not civilian themselves, but would increase civilian casualties as collateral damage. Such a policy, if it had been followed, would clearly be proscribed by the proportionality principle even if it *might* escape a narrowly defined view of discrimination.

It is the judgment of the bombing policy from the perspective of proportionality which is the most troubling legacy of the postwar debate. The uncertainty about casualty statistics is one part of the problem, but another is the question whether the principle itself can capture the complexity of high-tech warfare against an industrial society like Iraq. Even if the bombing policy does pass the discrimination test, how does proportionality evaluate the fact that "military targets" like the electrical system have immediate implications for the civilian population. Civilians are not the targets, but civilians suffer the *consequences* of the targeting. It is particularly the postwar consequences in the Iraqi medical system, in its water and sewerage systems which raise the hardest questions, since the postwar deaths have been in the thousands.

In my view one cannot have a *postwar* moral assessment of the Gulf War until the data are more settled, and the moral calculus assessing the impact of the war on the civilian life of Iraqi society is more precisely defined.

A different point needs to be pressed about the "just cause" arguments which were made during the Gulf War. The key issue is which versions of the cause-argument will be judged as having been valid. There were multiple appeals to "just cause": to resist aggression, to prevent nuclear proliferation, to restore the balance of power in the region, and to guarantee access to oil. Each of these issues is a serious question about the future of international politics, but they do not constitute equally serious claims to be a "just cause" for war. The determination of what does constitute a just-war claim—if any does—will establish precedents for future appeals to use force. While I believe more data are needed to resolve the just-means debate, I am prepared to argue that only the resistance-to-aggression rationale should be accepted from the list above as a *casus belli*. In a world where threats to proliferation are likely to increase, and where the interdependence of economies makes war for "vital resources" a likely topic of future debate, the moral arguments should strictly limit what constitutes *cause for war*. Proliferation, for example, is a deadly serious threat to international order but there are a range of methods to address the question which are short of war. Establishing a precedent that resort to force is an appropriate method to restrain proliferation erodes the case which should be made about other means to address proliferation, and it increases the likelihood that force will be used.

The post-Gulf War assessments are still unfinished, particularly in moral terms. Unless the scrutiny of both means and cause is pursued with a view to tightening the presumption against force in world affairs, it is almost certain that the "lessons" of the Gulf or its "precedents" will be used in the next argument about the need for a "quick, clean" war to protect the new order.

APOLOGIES

We have just discovered, to our chagrin, that the following memberships in the Commonweal Associates were not gratefully acknowledged, nor listed, as they should have been, in our January 17 issue.

Rev. Msgr. J.T. Alves, MA
Rev. Msgr. Raymond Bosler, IN
Helen Brinich, OH
Ed Corkery, PA
Margaret M. Foster, NY
Marie Collins Glasheen, CA
Mary Good, NY
E.T. McNamara, IL
James O'Toole, MA
Rev. Martin Osborne, NY
Jo Gocke Vallo, IL
Rev. William J. Wood, S.J., CA

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

NONE OF THE ABOVE

WHERE I DRAW THE LINE

We're moving toward a presidential race that promises to be every bit as embarrassing as the last, with a few sideshows thrown in already: Mario Cuomo's indecision, questions about Bill Clinton's fidelity, Bob Kerrey's tasteless jokes, etc. Commentary on the most sensational of these—the charges, floated in a tabloid, that Clinton had a long affair with a woman who has sold her story for money—has focused on what ought to be obvious: a candidate's private life should have no bearing on his or her suitability for office unless it involves something that might compromise national security or lead to manipulation or blackmail, as Kennedy's affair with a Mafia moll certainly might have done. Beyond this, there is a deeper question of character. If a man is capable of lying to his wife, might he not lie to you as well? If it is a constant pattern, maybe—but maybe not. I have known people who were scrupulously honest in their business lives, because, curiously, they thought of this part of life as more genuinely important than their family lives. This schizophrenia is not admirable, but it does happen.

I always distrust the interest that I (and the press) take in things like the scandals surrounding this presidential race, or in even more startling events, like George Bush's interesting display in Japan. It all reminds me too much of those rare occa-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sions when I find myself noticing sports —there's the same eagerness to know what is going to happen next, and the same sense that whatever is about to happen really is pointless; it matters only because we find the spectacle diverting, not because it has any real importance.

There is something undeniably entertaining about a bunch of self-important people all trying to convince us that they are the answer to our prayers. They don't act quite as well as Reagan did, but they are every bit as concerned to seem sincere. Some of them even seem like decent people. I like Paul Tsongas, who seems the most honest and the one least prone to pandering; he is also, probably for that reason, least likely to make it—a little too Mr. Rogers-ish. I worked for awhile for state government and recognize the real achievements of Bill Clinton, who has done some interesting and creative things in Arkansas, or at least knew enough to allow good staff people to get them done.

At the same time, the attention that politicians and the press pay to the polls reveals the worst thing about democracy. It makes followers of politicians, who must avoid anything like a disturbing idea, however true it might be, or however essential it might be to decent government. You simply cannot promise a national health-care program and a tax cut for the middle class at the same time, but it is being done. (This is why politicians lie: they believe that the polls force them to. You see that people won't tolerate a higher tax rate, so you promise not to raise taxes. You see that they want a national health-care program, socialized medicine—though as good Americans we avoid the "S" word—and so you promise that too. Then, if you are lucky enough to be elected, you either raise taxes or fail to deliver on the program you can't afford, and ask forgiveness, and you hope desperately that no one pays much attention to logic.)

America and Greece have the lowest tax rates in the West, but Americans insist that they suffer under an unfair burden. And in a sense they do: we get less for our taxes than do people in more highly taxed countries, where not as many people go to college (not at all a bad thing) but, when they do, college does not bankrupt parents, students, or both; we pay outrageous sums of money for health care, and there seems to be no end in sight to that problem. What about the dividend we ought to get with the end of cold-war military spending? It isn't a question of the money we have, but of the size of the enormous debt we have accumulated over the years. The money isn't there; it is only a question of more or less debt and debt service.

The solution of our politicians is to refuse to raise taxes, and (since even the most basic costs of government inevitably rise) cut out services to the poor or those who are not sufficiently organized to frighten the pols with a possible loss of office. Faced with the understandable feeling that they are not well governed, that the material quality of their lives is in decline, that their choices make little difference, a lot of Americans simply don't bother to vote. Presidents are elected by a minority of the people, since many people eligible to vote don't bother. This is sometimes called apathy, as if people would vote if only they understood what was at stake. I don't think it is. I think it is frustration, rather than apathy, and that the people who think voting is largely a meaningless exercise are, on the whole, right.

It shouldn't be this way, and doesn't need to be. But any change will require a profound shift on the part of the press, and a consequent shift in the way politicians behave. It will require citizens to understand that democracy requires patience and attention. It is astonishing today to look at the transcripts of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and see that nineteenth-century American audiences were willing to listen for hours to reasoned debate on subjects of deep importance to the nation. You could argue that they were bored, that there was nothing else to do on long, hot Illinois afternoons. And that could be—but look at what they found diverting, in that case, and at what diverts us. Television, a lazy press, and a frightened Congress have damaged democracy, maybe irreparably. This will remain true as long as the press (and by this I mean not only major newspapers but television and *USA Today*, the news sources a lot of the nation actually pays some attention to) doesn't feel that it has a duty to challenge politicians, to point out the emptiness of the debate, and to educate voters rather than spend all their energy on reporting what the polls, which are no more than a reading of the shallows, are saying about the daily feelings of an undereducated public.

While democracy is valuable primarily for negative reasons—it does help keep many forms of tyranny and the arbitrary use of power at bay—a form of government based on the opinion of the majority is not very good at advancing some of the deepest questions that societies have to wrestle with. This may be why such questions as slavery, abortion, and capital punishment prove so divisive. It isn't just the stubbornness of the contending parties, but the realization, on both sides, that the issues are too deep to be decided by a majority opinion.

Where the issue of abortion is concerned, the Democrats have become the prochoice party. No Democratic candidate seems willing to challenge this. The Republicans were assured for awhile that the party was a "big tent"—it could include prochoice as well as prolife members and candidates. As the Republicans seem to be moving away from this stance toward opposition to abortion and the support of a repeal of *Roe* v. *Wade*, there are calls for a return to the "big tent." Why aren't Democrats urged in a similar direction, allowing members and candidates to be prolife? An issue of profound importance is being avoided here, for the usual cowardly reasons.

Nothing on earth could persuade me to vote for George Bush. While the justice of the Gulf War can be debated by reasonable people, there is something murderously shallow about a man who can be jubilant about it. Unfortunately, as long as the Democrats remain so unambiguously on the side of permissive abortion laws, nothing on earth could make me vote for a Democrat. Single issue voting? You bet. I voted that way during the Vietnam era, and could never bring myself to vote for a candidate who was good on all issues —except those involving race. I suppose it depends on the importance of the issue to you. Most liberals I know wouldn't think of voting for an otherwise qualified anti-Semite; or a rabid supporter of capital punishment. During this coming election I will once again be with the nonvoters, and this choice has nothing at all to do with apathy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN TWENTY-SEVEN SHORT YEARS

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF MAURA-SAN O'HALLORAN

RUTH L. O'HALLORAN

For the past eight years a trickle of visitors has been coming to a small Buddhist monastery in northern Japan to see the statue of a young Irish-American woman who lived there in the early 1980s. During her three years of Zen training in Iwate and Tokyo she was known as Maura-san, or by her monastic name of Soshin-san. She became a Zen master in 1982 and was killed in Thailand six months later. In 1983, as her mother, I was invited to come to Japan for the dedication of her Kannon statue, an indication that she had become identified in the minds of local people with the bodhisattva Kannon, the Buddhist saint of compassion. Drawing on Maura's journals which she sent home before her final journey, I shall try to explain how it is that my Boston-born Catholic daughter is now known in Japan as Maura-Kannon, bodhisattva, Buddhist saint.

Her last photo, taken in front of a Bangkok temple just before she boarded a bus which crashed on the road to Chang Mai, shows a tall, blue-eyed, black-robed young woman of twenty-seven, with a radiant smile. How did this daughter of an American mother and an Irish father, educated at Sacred Heart Convent schools and Trinity College, Dublin, become not only a Zen master but a Buddhist saint?

As her mother I can speak confidently of her Catholic and Western cultural formation, but in attempting to analyze the changes that occurred during her last three years I must speak as an outsider. Although I have tried hard to understand—and I do have some insight—nevertheless my personal "enlightenment" is still incomplete.

In her journal Maura never mentions the fact of her birth and youth in Boston, but her New England background, and especially her grandmother in Maine, contributed as much to her formation as did her fourteen years in Ireland. Her position as the eldest child, flung into the role of "second parent" to five younger siblings at her father's sudden death, hastened a maturity that few adolescents experience. As a mathematician and linguist she distinguished herself in school and college but as a compassionate and wise human being she early gave promise of a rare spirituality. However, nothing about her conventional middle-class upbringing in Boston and Dublin seemed, in the normal course of events, to foreshadow the unique role she came to play in Japanese Zen Buddhist history.

Her interest in meditation may be a key, although this was not an uncommon interest among her peers in the 1970s. In our Dublin home in those days one often came upon her in some corner, sitting in the lotus position, calmly centered within herself, oblivious to phone, TV, and family. She had the ability to focus cheerfully and totally on whatever she did and I have no doubt that this was partly the result of her habit of meditation. Although her sex might have prevented her from considering a life of meditation in a Catholic monastery comparable to the rigorous monastery she entered in Japan, I never heard her express any regrets about her position as a woman within the Catholic church. She carried no chip on her shoulder although her highly developed sense of the need for social justice sometimes made her impatient with institutional obstacles to human development. This point of view found an outlet in college protests, volunteer social work, both in Dublin and Peru, union organizing, and in what I can only call a sort of spontaneous poverty. The latter attitude led to such a detachment from material things, especially fashionable clothes, that she often appeared genuinely shabby (years before

RUTH L. O'HALLORAN *is currently working on her doctorate in church history at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the current vogue for "shabby chic"). She deliberately limited herself to a very stringent budget.

Settling into her Japanese monastery in the winter of 1980, her customary Spartan lifestyle must have helped her to accept without complaint the frost-bitten feet, strange and awkward foods, unfamiliar customs and language, and briefest of sleeping hours on the floor of an icy temple. But perhaps her biggest adjustment was in simply being a young and personable female in a spiritual environment not only totally alien to her own but so traditionally masculine.

The fact that Maura grew up in a very feminine household (a mother, four sisters, and one small brother) may have made the male bastion of the Tokyo temple a refreshing change and she seemed to become a sort of honorary sister to all the monks. Her relationship to the master, whom she called Go Roshi [Master], was obviously the overwhelmingly important one for Maura and there can be no doubt that it was his constant and paternal concern that made it possible for her to achieve enlightenment so quickly, and to continue her Zen practice in the months that followed.

In Go Roshi she evidently found the father figure that she had lost at age fourteen but her feeling for him, as revealed in her journal, was much more intense than the normal daughter-father bond. He became in a true sense her master/teacher, although his lectures, which she transcribed, reveal him as intellectually much inferior to her. Their fierce attachment to one another still seems almost inexplicable to me given their difference in age, sex, nationality, and political philosophies. As a teacher of Zen practice he was obviously nearly a genius and it is apparent that the language and cultural barriers between them were quickly surmounted by his skill and her determination.

When I returned to Japan in 1983 for the dedication of her statue I could not help being aware that, despite some earlier unspoken disagreement between us because of our differing views of Maura, Go Roshi and I were at least united in the suffering we had both experienced in her loss. I have also come to realize that it would be unjust of me to blame Go Roshi for Maura's "defection"—if defection it was. She made a free choice as a grown woman and his influence on her was not of the unhealthy sort one hears of with "cult" leaders. He was, and still is, a much respected leader in his profession and in Buddhism. He would not have exerted such a strong influence on her if she had not been open to the exacting type of Zen training that he offered.

In her journal, Maura traces the step-by-step process by which she became a disciple of Zen. Her choice of a small, old temple tucked into a back street of the congested Shinagawa district of Tokyo seems to have been almost a chance decision. She was obviously under the impression that the master spoke English. Like most beginners in Zen, she was given the koan "*mu*" to solve. She immediately immersed herself in it so completely that she became almost oblivious to pain or distractions, determined to become one with *mu* [nothingness]. After several weeks of living *mu*, night and day, she believed she had solved it but was brusquely told by Go Roshi to continue working on it. This disappointment, in addition to her nostalgia for home at Christmas time, caused her first serious setback. In her journal she writes:

> Tears prick my eyes....It's Christmas day, like any other day. Even the post office is open. I decide monastery life is not for me. I love life too much to lock myself away. Maybe six months, a good chance to work on myself....I think I'll leave by summer but continue to study Zen in Paris.

Soon, however, this idea is forgotten when she travels by train north to the master's newer temple, Kannonji, in Iwate prefecture. She has gone up for the winter ritual begging, called *takuhatsu*, which she describes as follows:

> *Takuhatsu*—with our begging bowls and bells we walk slowly through the streets of Morioka, through the snow and sleet, in straw sandals, bells ringing, chanting. The little old women slide open the panel on their doors, drop a coin in a bowl and stand, with bent heads and long aprons, waiting for a monk's blessing. Sometimes they gasp in surprise when they see me, a woman, a *gaigin*. When I walk, just walk, chanting, not wondering what time it is or watching the doors, I am very happy.

When the week of *takuhatsu* ends, she returns to Tokyo to continue training under Go Roshi's direction, still struggling with her first koan: "Are things *mu* or *u* [nothing or something]? Waves on the ocean are separate but the same. When the wave subsides it doesn't disappear, cease to exist...but it does. It is no longer the wave but the ocean which is what it was anyway. Isn't that death? And *mu* is *u* and Bodhidarma [a founder of Zen] can say the dog has no Buddha nature."

Several days later she is still working on it: "I get up and go to the zendo at 4:00. Not so hard. Sitting alone, trying the new *mu* that Jiko-san has taught me. It's more open. I prefer it. I raise and put back my head, saying *mu*....It's warm, enveloping dark, a womb dark, shared with I don't know who. It's peaceful and comforting. I will sit every morning in that stillness."

Kendall Le Compte

The Bird in Flight

The bird does not oppose air,
does not see the earth as enemy,
does not achieve a thing at all.
It merely adds itself to wind,
incorporates the hollowness it has
to vapor and to ion and to words.

This is flying I suggest—
this is all that happens
as the blue heron appears
like so much thunder above the canoe
and passes on—beyond us, simply.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In March, on an impulse, she decides to have her hair shaved off like the other monks and finds her new baldness doesn't bother her. In the same month, psychologists come to test the monks' skin potential and respiration during meditation. They discover that she breathes only three or four times a minute during meditation as opposed to thirteen breaths a minute normally. They assume she has been doing zazen for years to achieve such control, instead of a mere three months.

By March 10 she could say: "My mind these days is so much calmer. It's still hardly empty, but quieter....I've had such happiness of late, but there's still attachment. That's why I have the fear that if I left here the peace might also leave. When even the peace isn't clutched at, then there'll be true peace."

Even her everyday cleaning tasks become opportunities to apply Zen principles: "Someone said we must take care of things simply because they exist. This occurred to me as I was sweeping the floor. In the dust pile there were sixteen grains of rice and two tiny crawling things that didn't need to die. It felt neither good nor bad."

After six months of intensive training, May 1980 brought a dramatic event. During *sesshin* [retreat], Go Roshi calls her to *dokusan* [private interview with master] which she describes thus:

> I feel so dejected, empty-minded....I do *mu* for him with all my strength, raising myself high and squeezing every bit of breath into *mu* until my head touches the floor. "Once again," he says, in English. (He doesn't speak English but I don't register surprise.) I do so. Then "once more again." My only thought was, he may do this for ages. Then he jumped at me, grabbed me. "This body is *muji* [nothingness], this head, eyes, ears." Suddenly I'm laughing and crying *muji* and everything around me...." Heart *muji*," he says, thumping me, and "Go Roshi heart *muji*," I say, belting him back. We're embracing. "*Kensho shita*" [it is enlightenment], says he. I'm surprised. I was too self-conscious even to know that it was *kensho*. Only when I got outside and was looking at everything and really seeing *mu* did I finally know. Suddenly I understood that we must take care of things just because they exist. We are of no greater and of no lesser value. At dinner the only words spoken aloud rang in my ears. "*Maura-san go kensho itashimashita*" [Maura has attained enlightenment].

This was the all-important breakthrough that takes years for some Zen students and is never reached by others.

Although Maura had by now achieved her goal of enlightenment, her training did not stop. In fact, if anything, it became more stringent. Her transfer to Kannonji plunged her into a rustic lifestyle that she loved. Her work in the temple garden provided her with an especially congenial additional training:

> I planted veggies, built a compost retainer, am preparing new beds. I feel such peace puttering about in the dirt with all the wiggly, slimy, ugly creatures. The creatures digging and fertilizing the garden are worth no more nor less than I. I'm careful about them now, try not to disturb them. I carry them to appropriate homes when they take over indoors....I'm very, very, very happy.

She was, by this time, becoming something of a celebrity and was a bit annoyed by the interruptions from media people:

> On the final day of *sesshin*, the TV people came to film me. They were fascinated and alarmed at my room [reached only by climbing a narrow ladder]. I liked them but felt silly talking about myself. Afterward, thinking about their question ["Why do you study Zen?"] it seemed like something I never decided to do, not with a sense of determination but in the same way that I know Monday comes after Sunday. Inevitable.

In August she took a break from monastic life to fly to Maine and to Dublin for her sisters' weddings. She found on her return, however, that her concentration had weakened, and after oversleeping one morning she scolds herself, saying:

> Today I was disgusted with myself. My zazen is not good enough or, strong enough for nonsense like missing a sitting; in fact, my zazen seems very bad. I know this is only a thing of my own creation—"good zazen/bad zazen" —but it reflects where I'm at, which is a pretty unadvanced state. Nuts. Get down to it!

When *takuhatsu* came around again she worried about how she would deal with it:

> Last year I could only survive by promising myself "Never again." Now it hurts just as much but it's as if it didn't matter. I feel I could go on and on. I'm working hard. In the morning I do *bupan*, work for three hours (begging), rest half an hour, then *soji* [cleaning], practice *ookyo* [morning service] at three, at 3:30 collect *bupan*, at 4:00 do *banka* [evening service] then every second day I cook. Up in the morning at 3:30 for zazen, evening, too.

During the monks' begging expeditions through the streets of Morioka, Maura remarks that "on several occasions, during our breaks, people gave us tea, toast, rice cakes, or pastries. Oh but they tasted good! Incredible. I wished I could always appreciate every bite, each sip with such relish." She concludes these remarks with her thanks to these generous people whose contributions sustain the temple and make her practice possible. "I owe them a debt, the debt of my self-oriented (though there is no self!) practice. It's a huge debt, one I'm inclined to shirk."

But she had her lighter moments, times of carefree exhilaration:

> I feel very glad to be young, not just mentally (as I sometimes feel) but physically. After shoveling snow in the sunshine my body felt strong, straight, and young. It was wonderful striding through the snow, shovel on my shoulder, breeze in my hair.

(Her hair, incidentally, had grown out sufficiently for her to make a good appearance at her sisters' weddings, but it was shaved off again before her graduation ceremony.)

At *sesshin* in May the master offered to give Kannonji temple to Maura if she would marry a fellow monk, Tetsugen-san, and live there.

> Almost convinced by Go Roshi's infectious enthusiasm, I found myself nodding—everything, anything was okay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then I caught myself. Wait! Hold it! No, that's not what I want....It's not the life for me....He was pushing me, pushing me hard. It was killing me to refuse him....

Finally, in tears, Maura left *dokusan* and was walking back to *zendo* when:

...my legs gave way. I fainted. Everybody was fussing. I couldn't understand. I just wanted a cup of tea. I tried to calm them, tried to stand up but collapsed, twice. They were worried, massaging my feet, applying carbon, discussing cures. Something left me, some huge oppressive weight that I'd never even known was there and only recognized in its lifting. I felt so light. I was laughing and crying. Euphoria. They were alarmed. I assured them I'd never felt so wonderful in all my life. My breathing stopped. My mind never felt so clear or lucid. The voices were very far away. I was in a crystal paradise. Galli was screaming at me to breathe. From somewhere I heard my voice softly answering "Hai." I'd have to show them I was okay. I snapped out of it, sat up, normal as hell. They were relieved but I only wanted to do zazen. I stayed up doing zazen but I was too tired for it to do much good.

Without knowledge of clinical psychology I cannot pretend to understand this dramatic episode, so uncharacteristic of my strong, sensible daughter, but it seems to me that she recognized that the master was now making unreasonable demands on her devotion. Although she hated to refuse him and had trained herself to conquer her own ego, her ego did in fact assert itself in this struggle of wills, but at the cost of her brief physical breakdown. It is significant that after this event Go Roshi finally accepted her decision to leave Japan at the end of her training and he made no further serious attempts to push her into a marriage.

Later that summer she writes:

Some days I feel as if I'm near some kind of wakening because my consciousness is different, spontaneously, really, losing itself in menial tasks. Other days, more cynical days, like today, I think I'm closer to a sleepening....Now I'm twenty-six and I feel as if I've lived my life. Strange sensation, almost as if I'm close to death. Any desires, ambitions, hopes I may have had have either been fulfilled or spontaneously dissipated. I'm totally content. Of course I want to get deeper, see clearer, but even if I could only have this paltry, shallow awakening I'd be quite satisfied. Facing into the long cold winter is not only fine, but I know I'll enjoy it. Everything seems wonderful. Even undesirable, painful conditions have a poignant beauty and exaltation. So in a sense I feel I've died. For myself there is nothing else to strive after, nothing more to make my life worthwhile or to justify it. At twenty-six, a living corpse and such a life!...If I have another fifty or sixty years (who knows?) of time, I want to live it for other people. What else is there to do with it? Not that I expect to change the world or even a blade of grass, but it's as if to give myself is all I can do as the flowers have no choice but to blossom. At this moment the best I can see to do is to give to people this freedom, this bliss, and how better than through zazen? So I must go deeper and deeper and work hard, no longer for me, but for everyone I can help.

Often, as in the above notes, Maura used the expression "to go down deeper" to describe her exertions during zazen. In the course of my own reading on Zen I have come across both Christian and Buddhist writers who speak of two types of people, those whose consciousness is shallow but wide (which includes most of us), and those few others whose consciousness is narrow but deep. We call these people mystics because they go deeply down, acquiring wisdom rather than knowledge, seeking personal fulfillment in some form of meditation such as Zen. Although I shall always regret that Maura had to seek so far outside her own background and tradition to find what her "vertical" temperament required, I do accept what she called the "inevitability" of this move.

Autumn 1981 brought my own first visit to Japan, an interruption of Maura's training but an opportunity to judge for myself the effect her immersion in Zen was having on her. I never abandoned my reservations about the choice she had made (Maura knew this but blamed it on "culture shock"), but I could see that her happiness was genuine and much of the credit had to be given to her whole-hearted surrender to Zen monastic life. Despite my ignorance of the language, I came away deeply impressed with the sheer goodness of her many Japanese friends and her fellow monks. Rarely in all my experience have I encountered such warmth, holiness, and generosity.

Soon after they learned of her death, Maura's friends and fellow monks in Japan sent me a collection of letters of condolence which included the following from her old master:

On December 8, 1979, Maura O'Halloran joined Toshoji Doairyo and we had a Tokudo ceremony ["investiture"] on December 10. Her Tokudo name was Daigo Soshin Hikyuni. She began her vigorous training from that day.

On January 5, 1980, 6:30 A.M., she left Ueno Station to the Kannonji in Yahabacho, Iwate-ken, with Sato Jiko and Dote Tessan. For thirty days from January 6 she trained in strict *kan-shugyo* [training in freezing cold]. It was –20° C. weather in Morioka where she had her training. She returned to Toshoji on February 6.

When I was ten, I had my Tokudo Ceremony at Fukuzo-ji in Johoji, Iwate-ken. My master, Fuchizawa Chiaki, said, "Zen monks must work twenty hours, and three hours for sleep every day." Maura did exactly that.

Our grand master Dogen went to China and to the Tendo mountain for one thousand days, working hard all day, he sat for meditation at night. He slept two or three hours in the sitting position. Maura did the same. She was the modern Dogen.

There was a spring training at Kannonji from May 2 for five days. Maura reached her enlightenment on the first day. She went in for meditations twice, three times a day, and solved all three thousand koans. We had her Hishinsai [graduation ceremony] on August 7, 1982.

She requested to become a Tenzo [kitchen person] for the autumn training, starting from October 1. Her wish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was granted. She completed her circle and left Narita Airport on October 9.

I received an international telegram on October 25, 8:00 P.M., which said Maura had died of accidents in Thailand on 24....

She had achieved in twenty-seven years what took the Shakuson eighty years. She was able to graduate Dogen's thousand-day training. Then she left this life immediately to start the salvation of the masses in the next life! Has anyone known such a courageously hard-working Buddha as Maura? I cannot possibly express my astonishment.

HAN TEKKYU

October 27, 11:00 P.M., as I watch the eleventh-day moon. □

THE CHOICE IN 'CHOOSE LIFE'

AMERICAN JUDAISM & ABORTION

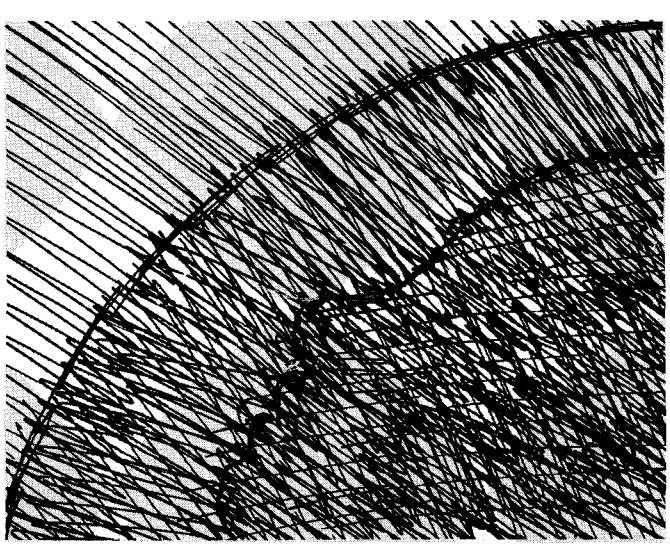
SCOTT AARON

One of the most perplexing questions to Christians interested in the abortion debate is how can Judaism, a religion that celebrates the ethic of "choose life" found in Deuteronomy 30:19, support and condone elective abortion rights in America? Jews support the availability of abortion in far greater numbers than members of any other religion. Some of the leading public figures in the abortion rights movement are Jews. Almost all Jewish politicians have taken a prochoice stand as well. Yet, Judaism reveres as a primary ethical principle the doctrine that no one has the right to put one life before another life. So, is Judaism prolife or prochoice? Paradoxically, it is both, but Christians cannot grasp this without some basic knowledge of American Judaism from both the religious and secular perspectives.

American Jews parallel our Christian neighbors. Of the three main movements within Judaism, the Orthodox community generally opposes nontherapeutic abortion while the Conservative and Reform movements generally support elective abortion. This is comparable to the division between the Catholic church and certain evangelical and fundamentalist Christian denominations which reject abortion under almost all circumstances, and those "progressive" branches of Christianity which generally accept abortion as a moral option at least under some circumstances. The traditional versus modern (i.e., historical vs. contemporary) split in Judaism appears to reflect the division within the Christian community. These appearances, however, are deceiving.

Historically, Judaism is a religion with its own set of laws and standards which, for observant Jews, is as binding as the civil law. Halacha is the body of rabbinical laws (similar to American common law) which are interpretations of how to observe the 613 mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah (five books of Moses traditionally believed to be directly from G-d) in every aspect of daily life. Contrary to general Christian teachings of morality, it has been the traditional belief in Judaism that life does not fully begin until the child is actually born. According to Rabbi David Ellenson, dean of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion campus in Los Angeles, "basic Jewish rulings on abortion stem from the *Mishna, Ocholot* chapter 7, 6th Halacha, which basically asserts that on a certain level the mother's life takes precedence over the child's life as long as the child is a fetus in the womb." "Once the child enters into the air," however, "then the child's and mother's life take on equal value."

During the first forty days of gestation, the fetus is considered to be in a liquid or unformed state and thus is expendable if



SCOTT AARON *is a teacher of Jewish ethics and values for the Toledo Board of Jewish Education and Temple Shomer Emunim, Toledo, Ohio.* *He wishes to thank Guy Condon and Paul Linton of the Americans United for Life Legal Defense Fund, and the Reverend Robert Kirtland for their suggestions and guidance.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

necessary because it is not yet alive. After the fortieth day and up until birth, the fetus possesses the status of a limb and is not regarded as a separate and equal life to that of the mother. Thus, the fetus is not a "*nefesh*" (a soul) until its birth. "On the other hand," as Rabbi Ellenson points out, "while it may not be a soul and therefore fully a person, it is not a nonperson either." Just what rights the fetus has and what reasons justify an abortion are the points of conflict on this issue between the traditional and modern Jewish communities.

Orthodox Jews follow the traditional Jewish belief that we do not "own" our bodies because they were created by G-d in G-d's image. Hence Judaism emphasizes that it is incumbent upon Man to take care of and protect his health, and to do everything possible to sustain life. This ethic permeates Jewish law, including the strict prohibitions against murder and reckless activity, the condemnation of euthanasia as murder, and the allowance of exceptions to the sabbath and dietary laws in order to preserve life. The recognized beginnings and potential of life that the fetus possesses is thus held in very high moral esteem, and Orthodox tradition would usually sacrifice the fetus only to preserve the life of the mother.

There is, however, strong precedent within the Orthodox tradition which would allow abortion to preserve the physical health of the mother. Such a situation might arise if the mother had diabetes and the pregnancy would seriously and adversely affect her health to the point that she was unable to function normally, or if she had cancer in remission which the pregnancy might reactivate. Decisions as to whether an abortion would be necessary under these or similar circumstances would be made by an observant Orthodox woman who consulted not only her physician but also her rabbi. Together they would decide if the justification for the abortion was within the moral standards of Jewish law, after weighing the needs and risks to the mother with the moral obligation to create and preserve life.

The key point here is that once a determination is made that an abortion is necessary, the woman is mandated by religious law to preserve her own life and health. To jeopardize her life for that of the fetus would be committing a sin because unlike the child in utero, who may not survive the pregnancy or the trauma of the birth process, the mother's life is already established. Dr. Fred Rosner, a physician and an expert on Jewish biomedical ethics, points out that to traditional Jewish thinking "it's just a mere technicality that says that life begins at birth in Judaism and not at conception the way Catholics have it." The fetus thus occupies a position of developing, not substantiated, life. "Therefore," says Dr. Rosner, "when it's one life against another, you save its mother's life since human life is of infinite value. To save a life you do anything, even if it includes the destruction of an unborn fetus."

This is a hard distinction for many people to accept, Jews and non-Jews alike, but it establishes a necessary guideline for such life-and-death decisions. This is why traditional Judaism, while recognizing and preserving the moral values involved, does not regard abortion as murder. But, as Dr. Rosner points out, "without this saving of a life, you can't touch the fetus just for convenience sake or financial reasons."

Modern Judaism, most notably the Conservative and Reform movements, expands upon the definition of what is permissible abortion. It is important at this juncture to point out the differences in interpretations of the Halacha between the major branches of American Judaism. As noted earlier, the Orthodox follow Halacha literally and rabbis who are recognized by the Orthodox community are bound to handle all issues and questions in strictest conformity with it. Conservative Judaism, although believing that all of the commandments are from G-d and that all Jews are thus bound by them, also believe that there is room for flexible interpretation and application. For instance, Conservative rabbis are very supportive of the use of modern medical technology, such as amniocentesis, in helping resolve these issues. "Since Conservative Judaism believes that Jewish law must be studied and applied historically," writes Rabbi Elliot Dorf, dean of the Conservative movement's University of Judaism in Los Angeles, "it does not say, as some Orthodox rabbis have, that women should never engage in these techniques since that will only encourage them to abort the fetus if they find out it is defective." By way of contrast, Rabbi Dorf writes that "Conservative rabbis...maintain that when the physician says that an amniocentesis is advisable, the woman should have one" ("Abortion: Where We Stand," *United Synagogue Review*, Spring, 1990).

Reform Judaism rejects the traditional belief of the revelation of the commandments directly from G-d to Man, and instead believes that divinely inspired men wrote the Torah and that men of equal stature throughout the ages developed the Halacha. Therefore, people today have a choice as to which of the commandments to follow and to what extent, as well as how to interpret the Halacha; it should serve not as law but as guidelines. The emphasis on choice is qualified, however, by the belief that the freedom of choice is meaningless without making religiously based choices in a serious and informed way. Reform Judaism emphasizes that Jews are bound to follow the ethical mitzvot but are free to determine the extent of ritual observance. Therefore, it is natural that in the area of Halacha and abortion, interpretation and compliance differ as well.

Conservative and Reform rabbis differ from their Orthodox counterparts as well in that their advice and counsel is not binding upon their congregants who must choose for themselves what course their lives will take. Rabbis can influence them only through persuasion and education. "I see the role of...the rabbi in a case of this sort not as a decisor but as an alter ego," writes Judith Hauptman, associate professor of Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, "whose job it is to push the mother to think her decision through with painstaking care, to lay the burden of proof on her shoulders, to help her either justify to herself that abortion is the moral choice in her particular case, or if not, to carry the pregnancy to term" (*United Synagogue Review,* Spring, 1990).

Modern Judaism, as can thus be expected from its expansive tradition, can find justification for abortion other than the life or physical health of the mother. Emotional and mental stress may be seen as permissible grounds for an abortion if the mother

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is seriously affected by them. As it is consistent with Jewish tradition, modern Judaism supports the belief that an abortion is permissible at any time when the mother's well-being is at stake. In contrast, this does not necessarily apply to the child's well-being. Thus, there is general reluctance on the part of many modern rabbis to advise a congregant to abort a child on the basis of a potential birth defect. G-d determines some things beyond human control, and an abortion to spare the child a difficult life is seen as overstepping our control over life and death and intervening into some things that G-d has done for his own incomprehensible reasons.

Other rabbis would advise an abortion under these circumstances if the mother has expressed deep and damaging anxiety over this pregnancy because her well-being, not the fetus's, is in jeopardy. However, as Dr. Hauptman points out, "a rabbi ought to encourage a woman to engage in a serious moral calculus." While a pregnant woman contemplating an abortion for these reasons needs to consider the effect of a greatly impaired child on the needs and responsibilities of her entire family, she needs to weigh that against her own sense of value for the life of that fetus. "If the phrase 'abortion on demand' means that one may choose abortion without thoughtful consideration of all the relevant social and moral issues," says Dr. Hauptman, "then I too am opposed to it." The same logic may also be applied to abortions sought on the grounds of rape and incest.

Abortion as a method of dealing with an unwanted or inconvenient pregnancy is not condoned by any Jewish movement, but modern rabbis often justify the sacrifice of the child as a means of dealing with a realistic threat to the well-being of the mother. The loss of the quality and value and even potential of the mother's life can justify to many the sacrifice of a potential life, especially in cases like teen-age pregnancy. Rabbi Mark Washofsky, professor at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Cincinnati campus and a recognized expert on Reform Judaism and abortion, points out that "Moses's exhortation to 'choose life' is a general thrust of Jewish life and observance which, if it means anything, means that we ought to be very careful about life-and-death decisions." He and many modern rabbis see life as definable in more than one way. "If these cases are serious enough that the rabbis have been willing to permit them, perhaps that is choosing life also and perhaps that is also making it possible for women and families to get on with their lives."

The nonclerical Jewish community is often more vocal on its prochoice position than the religious leadership and for distinctly nonreligious reasons. As Rabbi Washofsky clearly says, "I think the average Reform Jew doesn't really think of it in religious terms." For him it is a personal as well as a professional issue, extending beyond his rabbinical position. "Free choice is something I believe in because I'm an American, suburban, urbane, liberal type person and this is what I would believe in if I weren't Jewish. So therefore it's the right thing to do and Judaism believes in doing the right thing, and therefore, Judaism believes in unrestricted access to abortion."

The secular Jewish communal organizations see the issue here as not just one of choice but of protection of constitutional rights. The strongly Catholic and Christian composition of the prolife community, and attempts to legislate what appears to be their religious position, sound alarm bells among secular Jewish leaders. "There is not one Jewish position on the abortion question," says Michael Sandberg, Midwest civil rights director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai Brith. Because the potential for diverse views based upon religious orientation is so great, he says, "we regard it as a question of freedom and in large measure a religious freedom." The Anti-Defamation League has a time-honored policy of defending First Amendment issues regardless of which religious belief is being threatened. "We respect the views of the different sides of the controversy and do not say that we are adhering to the Jewish position, but rather regard the prochoice side of the argument as the essential freedom of religion that our organization stands for." Sylvia Neil, director of the Chicago office of the American Jewish Congress, puts it more directly. "If you are looking at this issue in terms of civil liberties or rights for women, a society that is open and is progressive in terms of religious rights most likely is also going to be progressive towards Jews and Jewish rights. Privacy is a religious liberty as well as a civil liberty."

A brief look at the past illuminates the source of these concerns. The United States is the first country in modern times that has allowed Jews to observe freely their religion and participate in every aspect of society without restriction based on faith. However, for much of its history, this country has been influenced by the Christian demographic majority who have incorporated mandatory church attendance, moral purity laws, mandatory prayer in schools, Sunday "blue" laws, public funding of religion, and other Christianity-influenced beliefs into secular law. Only in this century has the Supreme Court declared most of these laws unconstitutional because they violate the First Amendment's prohibition against establishment of a state religion and the freedom of religious exercise for minority religions such as Judaism.

For Jews, there is an underlying fear of losing these hard-won religious freedoms. If we lose the right for a Jewish woman to determine when her religious beliefs mandate an abortion, then next will be prayer in schools, Sunday "blue" laws, public funding of religious institutions: a return to the time of Christian laws for a Christian America as Father Charles Coughlin and William Jennings Bryan among others used to advocate. As Mr. Sandberg points out, "you could argue that if abortion laws should change and become more restrictive or even outlawed, that might pave the way for further efforts by people who argue forcefully that religious teachings ought to have the force of law. We think they shouldn't." This concern is not because Jews want to suppress or neutralize Christianity, but because they want the full protection of the Constitution to value their own varied religious beliefs with equal freedom as all of the other members of the American pluralistic society.

Judaism and Christianity are not analogous on this issue and the legalization of one clearly religious belief, such as life beginning at conception, would conversely outlaw any other. Thus, from a Jewish civil rights perspective, it is understandable that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many Jews see the chipping away at *Roe* as the cracking in our constitutional foundation. As Mr. Sandberg emphasizes, "our concern is that none of the religious teachings warrant inclusion by statute or constitutional amendment as part of American life in this democracy. None ought to be adopted as law and any ought to be available as people decide to follow their own religious beliefs on such a difficult issue as this." This concern has become increasingly heightened since the Supreme Court handed back *Employment Services* v. *Smith* during the 1989-90 term which allowed the state of Oregon to make ceremonial use of peyote illegal even though it was an important and historically established part of American Indian religious worship. The Court found banning illegal substances even from religious usage to be overridden by the legitimate secular purpose of controlling drug abuse. The leap from state control of religious observances involving peyote to state banning of a religiously motivated reproductive health decision is not a long one in the eyes of many civil libertarians.

Not every Jew shares Rabbi Washofsky's analysis. The largest Orthodox community organization in America, Agudath Israel, repeatedly sides with the prolife movement in *amicus curiae* briefs in cases dealing with abortion-related issues. Orthodox Jews can regularly be found with Catholics and Christians picketing abortion clinics in their communities. Yehuda Levin, an Orthodox rabbi and president of the Jewish Anti-Abortion League in Brooklyn, resents the shift away from the traditional Jewish respect for fetal life toward nonphysical maternal needs that modern Judaism has initiated. He also believes that modern and secular Judaism's prochoice stance sends false and dangerous messages to the Christian community. "I feel that it's important that the message go out to the hearers of Jerry Falwell or Cardinal O'Connor that there are Jews who keep the traditions." For Rabbi Levin, these traditions mean the allowance of abortion only for severe, therapeutic crises. The abortion disagreement, he believes, reflects the broader fundamental differences between modern and traditional Jews. "We do things the way our grandparents did a thousand years ago," he says, "or to put it in more contemporary terms, we never lost it. The Jews who never lost it have a very prolife view which frankly predates the Christian prolife view."

Overall, it can be said of American Jewry in relation to abortion that while our general secular concern is religious freedom, there is a very clear belief in all the movements of the Jewish religion that fetal development is the beginnings of life and that decisions regarding its possible termination should be treated with the seriousness appropriate to such matters. Still, when the viewpoints range within our community from endorsing elective abortion accessibility because "it's the right thing to do" to opposing it because one believes in living daily life "the way our grandparents did a thousand years ago," no one can say that there is a single Jewish position on abortion or that Judaism itself is prolife or prochoice. This can only be said about individual Jews.

It is thus possible to see how the charge in Deuteronomy 30:19 to "choose life" can be believed to be served by both modern and traditional American Judaism from their respective viewpoints on the abortion issue. Translating this into political support, the majority of American Jewry comes down in favor of some form of abortion availability even if only for life and health purposes because of the mandates of Halacha. Garnering Jewish support for restrictions on abortion that would severely weaken or overturn *Roe* would be difficult. The Jewish community would be concerned that the legalization of one religious viewpoint (i.e., life beginning at conception) would limit or deny decision making according to religious teachings that may differ with the legalized view. This analysis may not always prove true though on related issues such as parental involvement in the abortion decision for minors or public funding for nontherapeutic abortions. Although there is certainly room for discussion and compromise in the moral and legislative debates on abortion, Christians and Jews will never make any mutual progress on this issue until they understand and acknowledge the differences in religious belief systems and the confines of the American Constitution. □

SCREEN

THE DEAD & THE LIVING

'BOVARY' & 'HOWARD'S END'

Claude Chabrol, the director of some ingenious murder mysteries, has murdered Emma Bovary quite deftly. A fastidious assassin, he has neither mutilated nor even bruised the lady's body but has simply drained the blood out of her. The blood of *Madame Bovary* is the style of Gustave Flaubert. Chabrol has found no cinematic equivalent of that style, so this adaptation is a good-looking corpse.

Virtuosity is what drives the book, not psychology, sociology, or spirituality. Of course, while reading you learn a great deal about the way small-town society works, and the dangers of having a shallow dream life. But Flaubert isn't Freud or Thorstein Veblen. His pride is to take the utterly banal events leading up to the utterly banal suicide of an utterly banal woman and transform all that petty squalor into magic through sheer novelistic technique. Each episode of *Madame Bovary* is a narrative stunt—a stunt that tells you a lot about human life. The only stunt that Chabrol brings off is to preserve Flaubert's plot and even many of his words (spoken by a narrator) while eliminating the novel's special life. One might say to Chabrol what Mark Twain said to his wife after her only essay at the art of cursing, "You've got the words but not the tune."

In the movie, as in the novel, Emma sighs, "Why, *why* did I ever marry?" But Flaubert places that question near the end of an extraordinary, poetic catalogue of all the boring little details that make up the routine of Emma's married existence. That sigh is the last line of a bravura stanza that happens to be written in prose. In the movie, Chabrol simply springs the line on us after a few shots of Emma working at her embroidery and a few other tasks. Flaubert renders the banal poetically: the rhythms

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of his sentences and paragraphs are as highly charged as his heroine is listless. But Chabrol surrenders to banality with banal filmmaking. This movie's style can be summed up with the same simile Flaubert used to evoke poor Charles Bovary's conversation: "As flat as a sidewalk."

What I particularly regretted was the lack of sensuality in this movie. It's quite clear that, though Flaubert sends Emma to her doom with honest mercilessness, the author was turned on by his own heroine and this susceptibility helps give the novel its unquenchable eroticism. ("She could hardly wait to undress: she pulled so savagely at her corset string that it hissed around her hips like a gliding snake.") But the love scenes in the movie are antiseptic. One of them even displays the heroine and her student lover in that classic pose of movie prudery trying to pass itself off as erotic daring: the bodies side by side in bed with the sheets neatly clasped just above chest level, as if the camera were a hotel detective bursting into the room. *(The Prince of Tides* contains the same staging for the Streisand-Nolte bedroom tumbling, but La Streisand redeems it by showing a generous portion of back.)

The publication of *Madame Bovary* created a scandal. What's scandalous about this movie is that it seems ready to snap to attention to receive the Legion of Honor.

Director James Ivory and scriptwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala have been both conservative and bold in bringing E.M. Forster's *Howard's End* to the screen. They have adhered to the novel's plot, preserved an amazing amount of its dialogue, and have been scrupulous in regard to its themes and ideas. But they occasionally emphasize what Forster only implied, imply what he spelled out, and employ rhythms that give the story at certain times a flow and shape quite different from what we find on the page. They haven't balked at making us laugh out loud where Forster may only evoke a smile and, most decisively, they have fleshed out characters who, in the novel, seemed to have no existence beneath the neck.

Howard's End (1910) is the story of a suppressed legacy made good. The eponymous house and its grounds are bequeathed by Mrs. Wilcox, a strange, semimystical and unrealized woman, to her emancipated and generous young friend, Margaret Schlegel. The note of bequest, scribbled in hospital, is destroyed by the Wilcox family in the belief that it was the product of stroke-induced dementia. But later the widower Wilcox, a rich businessman of animation and charm who takes gloating pleasure in his knowledge of how "the world works," falls in love with Margaret. Through a bewildering series of events brought about mostly by Margaret's sister Helen through her connection with a penniless, high-minded clerk, Leonard Bast, Howard's End at last comes into Margaret's keeping and will be passed on to the descendents of Bast.

What coincidences there are in any Forster plot, what melodramatic confrontations and far-fetched connections! A mistress taken in Cyprus turns up by chance at her lover's daughter's wedding party in England. Two families set at odds over a broken engagement in the country just happen to move next door to each other in the city. A sword hung on a wall forebodes violence throughout the story and then punctually provides it right at the climax. E.M. Forster's name is associated with social comedy, the poignancy of frustrated love, and liberal idealism. But his plots suggest *Charley's Aunt* rewritten by Ibsen.

Yet nothing in *Howard's End*, novel or movie, makes you laugh unless you are meant to laugh. Forster works his precarious magic by bearing down on those moments in the plot that make us forget sheer plot: the contrasting reactions of people at a concert to Beethoven's music, the badinage among siblings, the train of thought set in motion by a patronizing remark. Stripped of Forster's narration and compressed into two hours' running time, how well can the story work?

Wonderfully, because Ivory and Jhabvala have strategies of their own, and Forster's wry humor is here often amplified to the point where it becomes fairly explosive comedy. By means of visual foreshadowings and parallels, they also call attention not to the melodrama of the plot but to its subtly supernatural aspect, the feeling that the characters are moving on tracks laid down for them by invisible forces.

For instance, the wonderful opening created by Ivory has Vanessa Redgrave as Mrs. Wilcox circling her beloved house during a nocturnal stroll, glancing through windows at her husband and children inside at play, basking in the atmosphere of a home that has been in her family for generations. The camera holds on Redgrave, and the gliding, circling movement gives the viewer the sense that the evening stroll is a confirming ritual of possession. Later, when Margaret, newly married, moves around and through the house (still in her new husband's possession), the camera repeats the circling movement (and the soundtrack reprises the opening scene's music), and we may receive the impression that Margaret is unconsciously enacting her predecessor's ritual, unconsciously casting a spell on property that is fated to be hers, that her dead friend willed to her and is still willing to her from beyond the grave.

The one great failure of the book was its sexual blankness. Only sexual heat can explain why the philosophical Margaret consents to marry the materialistic Wilcox. This key relationship is much more believable on screen than on the page because, to put it bluntly, the filmmakers can portray heterosexual attraction and Forster could not. In the book, Wilcox is but a walking waistcoat. On screen that waistcoat is filled by Anthony Hopkins, and Hopkins certifies Wilcox. This actor, always good but particularly brilliant as men with short fuses, endows Wilcox with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a sort of bustling, peremptory masculinity which, though engaging, is not at all incompatible with the character's smugness. Opposites do, after all, attract both in life and fiction, and when the tremulous, keenly intelligent Margaret assents to this man's proposal, we can sense that something in her is responding to physical need, both his and her own.

As for Emma Thompson who plays Margaret, she is a master of chordal acting: she hits two or more emotional notes simultaneously, thereby drawing a layered response from the viewer. At one moment she can be both an overwrought "old maid" sick of her own virginity and an ardent woman genuinely roused by love, an overopinionated bluestocking and a true pioneer for the social advancement of women, a silly goose and a noble swan. As she pleads with some male dolt to share his best thoughts with her because she does so need some good advice, she enacts that sort of goodness that can sometimes maneuver others into virtue by simply expecting them to be good. At such moments, Emma Thompson manages to embody Forster's vision of what humanity can be like at its fragile, vulnerable best.

Howard's End is exactly what Chabrol's *Madame Bovary* is not: an adaptation that honors its literary source by being lively cinema.

RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

IDENTITY CRISIS

'SIGHT UNSEEN,' 'DIVIDENDS,' & 'BEAU'

It is easy to be unfair to Donald Margulies as a playwright—to say, as did the friend who accompanied me to *Sight Unseen* at the Manhattan Theatre Club, that the production was excellent but that he had doubts about the play. The performers were indeed very good, and Lou Liberatore, substituting in the demanding leading role, was particularly impressive. The strange braying voice that Jon De Vries used when his character (Nick, the English archaeologist) attacked the protagonist seemed an odd choice, but he and the director (Michael Bloom) may have intended its abrasiveness as part of Nick's needling. The point about Margulies as dramatist is that he created four interesting characters and set up scenes in which they played well off one another, or in which three of these took turns playing off Jonathan Waxman, the central character. That might be enough to ask of a playwright.

Not that Margulies's themes are trivial. A writer-in-residence at the Jewish Repertory Theatre, Margulies has taken up the problem of assimilation for the Jewish artist in *Sight Unseen*, which was commissioned by the South Coast Repertory in California, where it played last fall. Jonathan Waxman, when we meet him, is the latest celebrity artist, a media-labeled "visionary," whose very large and presumably shocking canvases are so in demand that the art patrons are lined up for still unpainted works. Although he is seen as a critic of contemporary society, he is unwilling to explain his works to Nick ("I'm not gonna *tell* you what to see"), who would not listen in any case, or to the German journalist who interviews him in two of the play's best sequences. He is in London for his first European retrospective, which should be a moment of great triumph, but the recent death of his father, who never understood what he was up to, has made Waxman question his work and his life. His fame has brought him wealth, a gentile wife, pregnant with a son, and a farm near New Paltz, but something has been lost along the way. His Jewishness presumably.

"I'm an American painter. *American* is the adjective, not *Jewish, American*," he tells the interviewer, whose questions he hears as "sneaky little Jew-baiting comments." Those questions, her very slick elegance, and the abrupt way she begins to rewind the tape after he stalks out, as though she had what she wanted, seem to confirm his reaction; but the expression on Laura Linney's face at the end of the scene—at least, on the night I was there—suggests the interviewer's surprise at Waxman's response. A nice ambiguity. More important than the retrospective, for the play's sake, his English visit gives him a chance to see again the love of his youth ("the pioneer....The sacrificial shiksa who made your world safe for shiksas"). Patricia seduced him from his Jewish reluctance and was rejected by him two years later on the day he sat shiva at the death of his disapproving mother. Now married to Nick and to her archaeological work, Patricia pretends to have buried the past, but she will not give Jonathan the forgiveness he wants, presumably to validate his success. What he does get—at Nick's insistence—is the portrait he did of her when they first met, a work in which he sees the beginning of the artist (not the celebrity) that he became.

With so much going for *Sight Unseen*, I still understand my friend's doubt about the play. One of the problems is that Margulies has chosen to present the events out of sequence, playing with chronology in the present as well as the past. The final scene is the first meeting of Patricia and Jonathan, and perhaps it is intended to work like the final scene of Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* in which, thanks to reverse chronology, the playfulness is darkly undercut by what is to come, which we have already seen. Is the scene in Margulies's play to be read ironically as promise unfulfilled for both characters, or is it the first seduction of Jonathan from his Jewishness, a loss that so distresses him in the present although it is no greater loss than the one that Patricia suffered when he rejected her? There is not enough gained by the juxtaposition of the out-of-sequence scenes. One comes away from the theater wondering if the dramatist used this device to disguise a fairly conventional self-doubt play.

Assimilation-problem comedies have been going around this season. A production of Gary Richards's *Dividends* launched Theatre Ariel, a new group in Philadelphia "exploring the Jewish experience."

First produced last season at New York's Jewish Repertory Theatre, *Dividends* is about a struggling artist—no Jonathan Waxman, he—who rediscovers his Jewish heritage in the course

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of arranging for the bar mitzvah of his ailing grandfather, who missed his as a boy working long hours on the Lower East Side. Judging by the sometimes vocal response of those around me, the play's chief appeal—nostalgia and food jokes—lies in its recognition quotient.

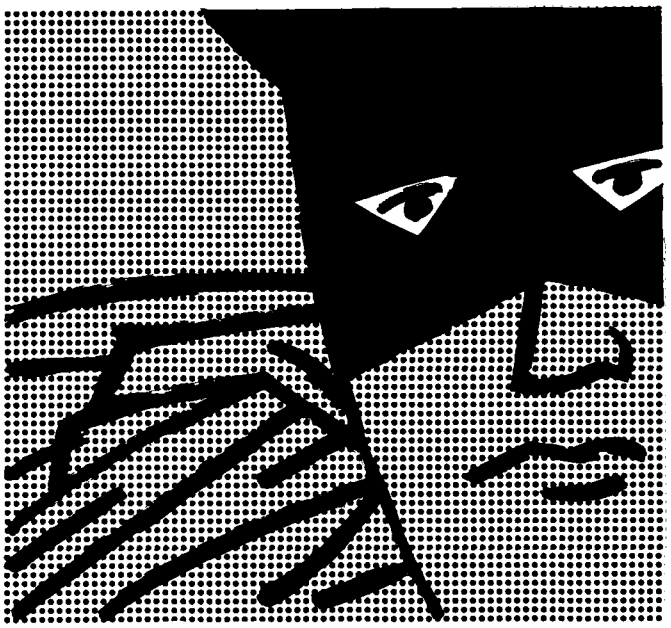
That is even more the case with James Sherman's *Beau Jest*, which seems to have settled into a comfortable off-Broadway run, only here the recognition is of the familiar conflicts between a grown daughter and the expectations of her parents. To still their disapproval of her gentile boyfriend, the daughter hires an actor (also a shegetz as it turns out) to play her Jewish doctor suitor. The deception escalates as the courtship turns into an engagement and ends predictably with actor-gets-girl and the blessing of the parents, which indicates that there was never a problem to start with. The original idea sounds like a good one around which to build a comedy, but the result—although Sherman is a Second City veteran—has the sophistication of a 1950s' sitcom and a predictable parade of Jewish-family jokes. The warm smiles that greeted the final curtain at the matinee I attended and the success of the show suggest that audiences, as usual, want to be cuddled. Compared to *Dividends* and *Beau Jest*, *Sight Unseen* is a complex and disturbing play, its dialogue capable of cutting surprises. And, of course, there is the good production.

GERALD WEALES

MEDIA

COMIC RELIEF

FROM 'GILGAMESH' TO 'SPIDERMAN'



The first time I assigned a comic book—Frank Miller's grimly revisionist Batman saga, *The Dark Knight Returns*—for my course in "The Art of Narrative," the consensus of my colleagues (I heard it through the grapevine) was "God—what's he trying to do *now*?"

Well, maybe just be honest. The fact is—though you're not going to hear it from many of the tenured priesthood of what Ezra Pound contemptuously called "Kulchur"—that some of the best and most human fiction in America, not to mention the rest of the world, is appearing not as "novels" but as that more-than-faintly-contemptible form, the comic book.

Of course, the publishers refer to them as "graphic novels" these days. That's the same sort of uneasy semantic bourgeoisification that got people to stop talking about "movies" and start talking about "film" or even—bleah!—"cinema." What the hell: like all high churchisms, it's a bother, but a harmless one. You want we should call the chopped liver, already, a *pâté? Sei gesund.*

In fact, like the movies, and like jazz, and for interesting reasons *not* like TV, the comic book is a true mass-cult art form that grows up against the sanctions of the cultural establishment, aka the good-taste fascists, and elaborates its special genius and energy in a fierce and defiant faith in itself. Jazz and the movies had a head start. They both began somewhere around the beginning of the century, so by now they've convinced all but the most dunderheaded that they are among the central imaginative glories of the age. The comic book really began about forty years later. And right now, just on time, it's approaching the kind of shimmering zenith jazz and the movies both hit in the midthirties to the midforties.

The American comic book as a serious visionary enterprise was born around 1938 when two dreamy, shy Jewish kids from Cleveland named Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster took their hand-drawn concept to a New York publisher who had been publishing "animal funnies" and gangster comics for some years.

What kind of story would a skinny, pushed-around kid from *Cleveland*, for crying out loud, invent? A story, maybe, about a skinny, pushed-around, four-eyed reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper who was *really* a strange visitor from another planet with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men? Bingo. And if I have to tell you who I'm talking about, then *you* must be a strange visitor, etc.

Just a sad adolescent fantasy, right? Right: like *Sister Carrie*, *The Great Gatsby*, and virtually every other novel written here since 1900. And Superman's popularity was so immense and unshakable that it made the publisher—D.C. Comics—the first and still the all-but-unbeatable giant in the industry. And two years later a seventeen-year-old kid named Bob Kane, who loved the dark, brooding world of German Expressionist films, invented Superman's inevitable complement: a wealthy, powerful, attractive guy who was *really*, because of a deep and unhealable psychic wound, a compulsively vengeful, nocturnal guerrilla? Batman: natch.

All the immense later elaboration of the "superhero" comic in the forties and fifties comes out of the yin/yang tension between these two myths. And myths they are: it's been said that no Indian ever reads the *Mahabharata* for the first time, and likewise no American—unless you were raised by, say, a sect of vegetarian neo-Babylonians—ever needs to be *told* who Superman and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Batman are. They are two crucial ways of finding a "real" identity, a self you can call your own and hold onto against the encroachments and impingements of the "real" world, the everyday life of the city which, as all us adolescents know, is in some subtle way out to get us.

As Paul Tillich argues, the religious quest, the quest for an authentic self, is always caught between the irreconcilables of transcendence and immanence. It's why Supes and Bats are less interesting for what they do than what they are (how many times can you save the world or clean up Gotham City?): Superman's problem is that he's really God and Batman's is that he really isn't.

Now around the sixties, the time of our *public* national coming-apart, the comics began "outing" this always-latent tension. Suddenly, the difficulties of being *Clark Kent* or *Bruce Wayne* became as important as those of their alter egos. And a new line of heroes, from Stan Lee's Marvel Comics, were developed just *for* their neuroses and hangups (e.g., Spiderman, Daredevil, and most poignantly Captain America, a WW II character resurrected during Vietnam and now agonized by the lost certainties of his patriotism). It was about this time, by the way, that I realized nobody *does* grow up, exorcised my expensively acquired snobbism, and began reading the damn things again. Could it be, asked the aesthetic Yalie, tremblingly reading *Fantastic Four* #167, that this stuff is as good as the Holy Cross fifth-grader had thought it was?

Yup. And it was going to get better.

From the late seventies, at least, and through the eighties, the art has matured and—just as Ellington and Basie did for Jelly Roll Morton—reaffirmed and validated the genius of its earlier manifestations. Frank Miller's four-part series, *The Dark Knight Returns*, is a stunning reexamination of the Superman/Batman mythos in terms of Reaganamerica's internal decay: and a major source not only for Tim Burton's *Batman* film, but for a lot of what I've been saying here. Bruce Wayne, now fiftyish, retired and heavy-drinking, decides to become Batman again because he is outraged at the urban sprawl. His opponent—now an agent of the Fed—is, of course, Superman. And the final confrontation is as apocalyptic as the Reagan/Bush world deserves.

Even more intricately, Alan Moore has produced a series of self-contained narratives—*V for Vendetta*, *Miracleman*, and *Watchman*—which with increasing genius (there is no other word) explores the idea of the comic book altogether as a psychic mechanism for dealing with the killing dubieties of our end of the century. I can't begin to describe the brilliance of, say, *Watchman*. But read it and then tell *me* that it's less admirable than Coover or Pynchon or Mailer or DeLillo.

And then there's *The Sandman*. It's a comic written by Neil Gaiman (like Moore, one of those transatlantic Brits), and for the life of me I can't think of a more fascinating enterprise in contemporary fiction. Listen:

Gaiman has invented, out of whole cloth, a mythology not just of the comics but of storytelling itself: storytelling, which I take to be the quintessentially human activity, from *Gilgamesh* to *American Psycho*. The world of *The Sandman* is *our* world, populated by ordinary, variously screwed-up folks, and it contains no superheroes. It is, however, haunted by gods. Well, not gods, exactly, but a family of seven characters who are called "The Endless," who are anthropomorphic projections of the essential human fears and aspirations, who are projections of our own condition and therefore are the *origins* of all gods and mythologies: and who *know* that that is all they are. Their names are Destiny, Death, Dream, Desire, Delirium, and Despair, and the seventh sibling, who has mysteriously departed, is unnamed. And the central character, Dream, who is profoundly uncertain of his ultimate involvement with human life, is not just "Dream" but the "Shaper of Form," that is, the narrative urge incarnate. *Sandman*, in other words, is evolving into a web, nearly Joycean, of interrelated tales, invoking all the world's major myths, whose ultimate assertion is the heroic hopelessness of a man as the storytelling animal.

"Postmodern" is a phrase lit. crit. types like to apply to contemporary writing that celebrates the equivalence of all truths and the breakdown of all certainties, even the certainty of the nobility of the human adventure itself. And "the death of literature" is a phrase lovingly applied by critics of the postmodern for what they see as the betrayal of the humanistic tradition.

Well, hey: I'm here to tell you that the one phrase is pointless and the other one is silly. If you think literature is dead, or if you think that authentic mythmaking is somehow impossible in the computer age, you probably can't read and you've sure been shopping in the wrong bookstores. Check out Miller, Moore, or Gaiman.

FRANK McCONNELL

Bruce Ducker

Fragment

I shake her by the shoulders
Hard, and her eyes lose focus
Harder still, so the years begin to tumble from her hair
Motes of dust from the imaginary mortar
That cements memory to her.
It is not youth I want to recover but
The wealth that youth had,
Spilling its coins on the cobbles,
Beyond reclaim
I want to shake the past from her, shake it so
I can scoop it up and together
We can spend it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A comic book that sears your heart

MAUS, A SURVIVOR'S TALE, I
MAUS, A SURVIVOR'S TALE, II
Art Spiegelman
Pantheon, $18 & $23, 153 & 136 pp.

Molly Finn

Maus is a comic book about the Holocaust. Please don't worry about protecting your sensibilities from anything so supposedly vulgar. In the thirteen years it took Art Spiegelman to produce this short masterpiece he subjected his own sensibilities to the fires of Auschwitz and they are highly refined. He has used this unusual form—his own artistic medium—to reveal with drama and graphic detail a vision of the most horrible event of our time.

The framework of this autobiographical memoir is a series of interviews between the young cartoonist-writer, Artie, now living in Soho with his wife Françoise, and his father Vladek, who lives in Rego Park, Queens. In *Maus I* Vladek, an ailing, self-pitying Holocaust survivor, is prodded by his son to tell the history of the Spiegelman family beginning with its comfortable middle-class life in a small city in Poland and moving through Nazi persecution, flight, squalor, and narrow escapes. The story continues in *Maus II*, moving to Auschwitz, and ending with an ecstatic reunion between Vladek and his wife Anja. But that's not the end of the story. Before, after, alongside of, and during these father-son interviews we are back in Queens, where Artie grew up, or at Vladek's rented cottage in the Catskills, watching father and son struggling with their memories, their feelings about each other, and their efforts to come to terms with two terrible losses. Vladek and Anja's son Richieu died during the war: he was poisoned by his aunt rather than given over to the Nazis (the aunt then poisoned herself). Anja herself committed suicide in 1968, when Artie was twenty.

Vladek narrates the Nazi persecution. He relates his history in accented English, and we come to know him as he was thirty years ago, a self-confident and resourceful young man who must learn how to do a little bit of everything to survive—and even to help others to survive. As he talks to his son, we see how his experience never leaves him. With alternating expressions of disgust, disbelief, and frustration, Artie listens to Vladek complain about his second wife Mala, who is also a Holocaust survivor and whom he accuses of being wasteful and trying to steal all his money. He complains about his poor health, to the extent of alarming his vacationing son with a telephone message that he has had a heart attack. Artie rushes to the phone, comes back to tell his wife Françoise, "He didn't even have a heart attack...he just wanted to be sure I'd call him back!" Even worse, Vladek has destroyed Anja's wartime diaries and all her personal effects. When Artie learns this he walks out of the last frame of *Maus I* muttering "murderer."

Spiegelman does not claim to understand the effect of the Nazi persecution on his parents. Is Vladek stingy and self-pitying *because* of his experiences? Does he use his history to gain sympathy? And his mother's suicide: was this a result of what happened to her at the hands of the Nazis? Or a reflection of her frailness? After the birth of Richieu, Vladek lovingly accompanied Anja to a hospital in Czechoslovakia where she spent three months recovering from depression. Artie is bitter about his mother's death. In a four-page comic about the suicide, published in 1972 and incorporated into *Maus*, Spiegelman depicts himself "left alone with my thought... Menopausal depression!... Hitler did it!... Mommy!... Bitch!"

As in any comic book, the entire story is told simultaneously in words and tiny drawings. The usual frame measures about 1 ¼ by 2 ½ inches and often includes three or four vividly drawn characters set in a brilliantly descriptive background. Period furniture is accurately drawn, cars are the right model and vintage, clothing and uniforms match—in fact are emblematic of—the characters' work and position in society. Larger frames emphasize a place or an event and allow the artist space to draw the most expressive of his bleak landscapes, including railroad yards, camps, and scenes of horror and destruction. Almost every one of these larger frames is a small masterpiece that rewards study and contemplation.

Spiegelman ingeniously depicts all the characters in the book as animals—that is, as people with animal heads. The Jews are mice, the Germans cats, the Poles pigs, and so forth. Vladek wears glasses on his mouse nose and dresses just like an uncle of mine who lives in Rego Park. Artie always wears a white shirt and black vest and smokes constantly. But for the most part the mice

AND IN THE EVENING WE GOT A SPOILED CHEESE OR JAM. IF WE WERE LUCKY A COUPLE TIMES A WEEK WE GOT A SAUSAGE BIG LIKE TWO OF MY FINGERS. ONLY THIS MUCH WE GOT.
IF YOU ATE HOW THEY GAVE YOU, IT WAS JUST ENOUGH TO DIE MORE SLOWLY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are interchangeable. With an artist's magic, Spiegelman expresses an entire range of human emotion with these simple inverted-triangle faces and using the gestures of their simple bodies. Seeing a crowd of these stylized faces makes the story universal, and potently conveys the victimization of a vulnerable, identifiable group.

In *Maus II* Artie's wife Françoise is there to help him figure out the growing complexities of the task he's undertaken. Françoise earned her mouse face upon her marriage to Artie by converting to Judaism "to make Vladek happy." "Yeah. But nothing can make him happy," Artie retorts. Françoise helps Artie recall his own experience as the child of survivors, and to figure out how to "reconstruct a reality that was worse than my darkest dreams. And trying to do it as a comic strip!... I mean, reality is too complex for comics.... so much has to be left out or distorted." "Just keep it honest, honey," says Françoise. She listens to Vladek and says, "Poor guy...I feel so sorry for him." "Yeah, me too," says Artie, " 'til I have to spend any time with him—then he drives me crazy!" But Françoise doesn't let it drive Artie crazy. Spiegelman's drawings of these two reveal in a few lines a deep love and caring that would take many words to express.

In *Maus I*, published in 1981, Spiegelman succeeded in communicating at least part of his vision of the Holocaust. In *Maus II* Artie must deal with the paradox of that achievement. In a remarkable passage titled "Time Flies," Artie is shown sitting at the drawing board. He is wearing the usual white shirt and black vest, smoking the usual cigarette, but rather than a mouse head he is wearing a mouse mask, and the air is full of flies. The person addressing us is Art Spiegelman, the author, in his own voice, reflecting about the events since the the success of *Maus I*. At the bottom of the page Spiegelman is saying, "Lately I've been feeling depressed." A balloon at the extreme right says, "Alright, Mr. Spiegelman...we're ready to shoot!...."

And the drawing board is revealed to be perched atop an enormous pile of corpses, hence the flies. On the next page an international crew of aggressive reporters is firing questions and thrusting microphones at him. He is sweating, bewildered, and miserable. As the frames progress he grows smaller and smaller until in the last one he is a baby. In response to the question, "Could you tell our audience if drawing *Maus* was cathartic? Do you feel better now?" he answers "WAH!" In the next sequence he climbs down from his chair, down the pile of corpses and, still the size of a tiny child, goes off to see his shrink. The comic strip form economically and starkly makes the author's point.

But Spiegelman doesn't leave it at that. The conversation he has with Pavel, his Holocaust-survivor psychiatrist, probes personal, psychological, and philosophical dilemmas and raises necessary questions without finding easy answers to any of them. Toward the end of the session, a specific technical problem the artist is facing is discussed—how to draw the tools and equipment his father would have used when he worked in a tin shop near Auschwitz. Pavel is able to give him a little information from his own past. And as Art walks home, he begins to feel better...and grows back to his normal size.

In a further comment on the press conference, Spiegelman draws himself as a television-shaped robot saying, "My projections of what others now expect from me...have bent me out of shape. Somehow I'm profiting from genocide. (I should be home working.)"

Art Spiegelman doesn't spare himself, and he doesn't spare us. He did his homework, carefully researching not only the tools in the tin shop, or how to repair shoes, but how to look into hell and pass on the vision to future generations. Economical, accurate, as distilled as poetry and as intimate as a diary, *Maus* brings a message of horror and inhumanity, and of the excruciating complexities of survival, love, and loyalty. It passes the story on. It breaks your heart. □

RONALD REAGAN'S CONVERSION

THE TURN: FROM A COLD WAR TO A NEW ERA
The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1990
Don Oberdorfer
Poseidon Press, $25, 514 pp.

David Callahan

As the former Soviet Union slides deeper into possible anarchy, it is difficult to recall that such a fragile and flawed empire was once considered a global menace. In retrospect, one cannot help but be amazed that the cold war dragged on for so long. By 1981, for example, the Soviet Union had already been eclipsed by the West in most of the standard measurements of power; Japan and Western Europe alone had nearly twice the population and four times the Gross National Product of the Soviet Union. Two decades after Nikita Khrushchev vowed to bury the West, the final shovelfuls of dirt were instead being piled on the Soviet Union's grave.

Of course, the cold war did not cease once the balance of economic power had shifted. Instead, a fierce military and ideological competition continued into the late 1980s. How this competition finally came to an end is the subject of *The Turn*, Don Oberdorfer's important narrative account of U.S.-Soviet relations from 1983 to 1990. In the conclusion of his book, Oberdorfer raises a question that implicitly frames his inquiry from its first pages: Is history shaped by the human will of extraordinary people or by external forces more powerful than individual actors? Specifically, should the cold war's end be attributed mainly to diplomatic efforts or did it stem ineluctably from geopolitical and geo-economic trends?

As a long-time diplomatic correspondent for the *Washington Post*, it is not surprising that Oberdorfer focuses mainly on the people who helped de-escalate the cold war. On the Soviet side, we learn much about the beliefs and motivations of Soviet lead-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ers Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and especially Mikhail Gorbachev. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevarnadze, a visionary figure, is also a central player in the narrative. Oberdorfer has extensively interviewed Soviet officials and citizens, enabling him to tell his story from the Soviet perspective. The key shifts in Soviet foreign policy are explained here in some detail and Oberdorfer presents a clear history of why Moscow decided to abandon its competition with the West.

Domestic problems were a principal factor in this decision. In a historic address to Soviet foreign policy officials in May 1986, Gorbachev articulated the logic which would guide U.S.-Soviet relations through the rest of the decade. He said that "without an acceleration of the country's economic and social development, it will be impossible to maintain our positions on the international scene." The main objective of Soviet foreign policy, Gorbachev said, should be to "create the best possible external conditions" for internal progress. From this basic prescription flowed a "new thinking" across the entire gamut of national security issues.

In Washington, the Reagan administration's intense anticommunism prevented the cold war from winding down as quickly as it might have. However, as Oberdorfer shows, the administration was not entirely inhabited by obstructionist hardliners. Secretary of State George Shultz was a moderate Republican by temperament and training. Beginning with a private dinner at the White House on a snowy night in February 1983, Shultz waged what can only be described as a heroic crusade to push President Ronald Reagan toward a more accommodating position on U.S.-Soviet relations. Over the next five years, Shultz would be the administration's point man in dealing with Moscow; every diplomatic breakthrough bore his imprint. More than any other U.S. official, Shultz deserves credit for the remarkable turnaround in U.S.-Soviet relations which occurred during the 1980s.

This is not to ignore the role of Ronald Reagan himself. Oberdorfer's portrait of Reagan will surprise many who still think of the former president as a knee-jerk cold warrior. Although Reagan entered office determined to wage a holy crusade against Moscow's "evil empire," he also had a visceral revulsion to nuclear weapons that could have made Helen Caldicott proud. During the entire history of the cold war, Reagan was probably the only high level U.S. official to ever seriously imagine a world without nuclear weapons. In time, this vision would prod him to abandon his harsh rhetoric toward Moscow and back efforts to better relations. Another factor which changed Reagan's views, he would later write in his memoirs, was his realization in 1983 that "many people at the top of the Soviet hierarchy were genuinely afraid of America and Americans." Once this elemental reality had dawned on the president, he lost much of his anti-Soviet zeal. Through the rest of his presidency, Reagan would seek to forge a new understanding with the Soviet leadership. By quoting from Reagan's private correspondence to Soviet leaders, almost gushy in its conciliatory language, Oberdorfer leaves no question about the president's sincerity as a peacemaker.

The personal dynamics of U.S.-Soviet relations were a crucial factor in ending the cold war. Yet even as he illuminates these dynamics in great depth, Oberdorfer strongly suggests that much more powerful historical forces were at work. In an April 1987 meeting with Gorbachev, Secretary Shultz—a former economics professor— lectured the Soviet leader on the economic changes which were reshaping the world. Shultz used four-color charts to show Gorbachev how the Soviet Union was increasingly locked out of an integrated technology, and how the Soviet Union was lagging far behind. By 1987, for example, it was estimated that the Soviet Union had only two hundred thousand microcomputers, most of them unsophisticated; the United States had over 25 million.

Basic economic realities dictated that the Soviet Union change course. Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* reflected this calculation, as did his decision to better relations with the West. The end of the cold war was probably accelerated by the diplomatic efforts chronicled by Oberdorfer in such minute detail. But ultimately, the cold war ended as a consequence of trends far beyond the control of individual actors. □

SCORSESE: A WORK IN PROGRESS

MARTIN SCORSESE
A Journey
Mary Pat Kelly
Thunder's Mouth Press, $21.95, 336 pp.

Richard Blake

From *Mean Streets* (1973) through the brilliant *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *Raging Bull* (1980) to *Goodfellas* (1990) and *Cape Fear* (1991), Martin Scorsese holds a solid claim to the title of America's premier filmmaker. While Woody Allen has documented the torments of affluence and Steven Spielberg has explored the imagination of childhood, Scorsese has peeled back the eyelids of his audiences and forced them to watch the sordid, cruel realities of urban life that most of us would rather not see. He is a major American artist, deserving serious critical attention.

Mary Pat Kelly, television producer, screen writer, documentarian, and teacher, has been following the development of Martin Scorsese for more than twenty years. They began a correspondence while she was studying as a Sister of Providence in Indiana and he had just begun his career as a filmmaker and teacher at New York University. She has previously written *Martin Scorsese: The First Decade*.

Their long relationship has given this new book a depth and texture rarely found in film biographies. After a brief introduction to each of her chapters, Kelly weaves together, without a seam showing, snippets of interviews with Scorsese and his family,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

friends, and collaborators, ranging from his parents and parish priest at Old St. Patrick's in Manhattan's Little Italy to major figures like Robert DeNiro, Paul Newman, and Liza Minnelli. Through this mosaic technique, the image of the artist emerges in photographic detail.

This anecdotal style sets well-defined limits on this study. The author has clearly chosen to write about the man and his artistic processes rather than his films. Rather than discussing the finished works and the life in a way that is mutually illuminating, she has provided snippets of interviews to explain how he selected a property, edited a script, or composed a shot. The method is more reportorial than reflective. In addition, by offering quotations solely from his enthusiastic friends and collaborators, Kelly's book has little critical distance from the films. Readers expecting interpretation and analysis of the films will be disappointed; those trying to understand the mind of the man behind them will be delighted.

The introductory chapter provides an illuminating discussion of Scorsese's Catholicism, his use of ritual and images, and his preoccupation with characters who sin and seek redemption, whether they know it or not. Scorsese does not discourage a theological analysis of his work: "My whole life has been movies and religion. That's it, nothing else." Although the religion comes up at various points in the book, the anecdotal method prevents the author from pursuing a systematic exploration of the topic.

The religious concerns of the author and her subject lead to a disproportionate preoccupation with *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), one of Scorsese's least successful ventures. It receives two full chapters, while *Taxi Driver*, an early masterpiece, is treated in eleven pages with illustrations. I have no reason to doubt that Scorsese, who spent one year in the minor seminary in New York before transferring to Cardinal Hayes High School, might have been fascinated with Nikos Kazantzakis's inflated novel and to this day he may regard the film as his most important work. The effort to make it preoccupied him for years, and the hysterical reaction of the religious Right must have made the project doubly memorable. But the venture was really an artistic misfire, a distraction from his more important work. His treatment of grace at work in a world crippled by sin is far more profound in *The Color of Money* (1986) or "Life Lessons" (his segment in the trilogy *New York Stories*, 1989). Again, quotations offer a unique insight into the enthusiasm of Scorsese and his friends for the project, but it forces uncritical acceptance of everything they say, and provides no space for the author or reader to ask whether such enthusiasm was justified.

Descriptive material on Scorsese's early works, including his student films and first projects in Hollywood, is informative, and the forty photographs, mostly informal shots from the sets, offer a sense of intimacy with the filmmaker and his work. The complete filmography of Scorsese's directing, writing, and acting credits is an invaluable reference tool. Unfortunately, several inaccuracies survived the editing process. The Latin words of institution of the Eucharist (page 9) are garbled, and the film *Years of Lightning, Day of Drums* is said to be an account of the assassination of Robert rather than John Kennedy. Fritz Reiner, a tyrannical director of "great movies," is mentioned on page 257, but no such person appears in any of the standard reference books. Is it Fritz Lang, or Carl Reiner, or Max Reinhardt?

Martin Scorsese is a work in progress. Scarcely fifty years old, he holds the promise of great films yet to come. While he grows as an artist, the critical literature will grow with him. Kelly has provided a fine beginning to that work. □

OVERCAST, VARIABLE WINDS

STRANGE WEATHER
Culture, Science, and Technology in the Age of Limits
Andrew Ross
Verso, $16.95, 275 pp.

James T. Fisher

As an undergraduate I took a course on "Religion and Science," in which one of the main texts was T.S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Every time the professor alluded to Kuhn's notion of "normal science" (that research conducted within the bounds of an established theoretical "paradigm"), he looked out the window and gestured at the laboratory buildings situated on a hilltop across the sluggish Raritan River, where normal science surged onward, grandly indifferent to humanists and their nervous concerns about the arrogance of "scientific objectivity" and its truth claims.

A leading practitioner of "cultural studies," Andrew Ross dismisses the humanist critique of technological sprawl as irrelevant and soft-headed, though dangerous when in service of "the interests of white masculine power." Although Ross is mainly concerned in this book with "weird science" (New Age medicine, cyberpunk science fiction, futurology, the Weather Channel), he would also have us view normal science, and its technological fruits, as "a fully cultural process, soaked through with social meaning that only makes sense in the context of familiar kinds of behavior." Ross sees the social meanings of science and technology as part of a larger struggle for "radical democracy," and persuasively argues that a Left cultural politics that dismisses technoculture is doomed to extinction.

"Cultural studies," a hot new academic discipline, emerged in the wake of conventional Marxian scholarship's failure to make any sense of the politics of popular culture in England and America. A new generation of academics fond of interdisciplinary work recast contemporary social history in terms of the protopolitical "resistance" to capitalism and mass culture located, for instance, in the subcultures of rock 'n' roll, car-customizing (workers negating the logic of mass production), and English football club "fanzines." These scholars show greater sensitivity to the interaction

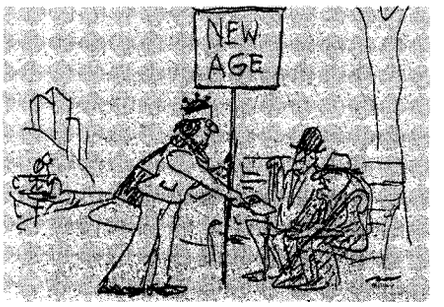
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between cultural producers and consumers than their somewhat haughty Marxian forebears. Yet as Ross candidly admits, this school has demonstrated less charity toward such middlebrow "taste cultures" as New Age "pseudoscience," an interpretive task he assumes bravely, if with characteristic ambivalence, evaluating the countercultural potential of "brain machines" ("designed to balance the left and right brain in holistic synchrony"), biofeedback, and a wide range of holistic therapies that undermine the privileged status of "official" science and medicine.

Ross argues that the New Age movement's concern with the environment and "small-scale...cooperative communitarianism" presents a critique of multinational conglomerates and their destructive technologies; its cultivation of the personal offers "a politics of identity and subjectivity that has not been entirely subsumed by the New Right's picture of individualism, aggressively protective of its privatized will to consume." So far so good. But New Age has also exalted a "holistic opposition between 'nature' and 'technology' [which] is quite groundless. Technologies are social processes of organization, in one form or another, and the sacralized passing of a healer's hands over the body of a patient is just as much a technological process as the demonized use of external hardware like CAT scans or electroencephalograph machines." In his ruthless critique of sentimental qualms about technology, Ross bravely echoes the call of historian Donna Haraway for "a new sense of realism about our cyborg condition" whereby the nature of human-machine interaction can be aggressively contested by "progressives" rather than feared or loathed.

Readers frustrated by Ross's occasionally melodramatic prescriptions may still appreciate the verve and wit he brings to his analysis of countertechnocultures. Those of us intimidated by video games have much to learn from his discussion of teen-age "hackers" and the cyberpunk genre of science fiction that emerged in the 1980s. Though the creators of these subcultures are trapped in webs of contradiction—hackers challenge the elitist control of information technologies yet emulate the entrepreneurial energies of corporate capitalism, while cyberpunk utopias "expose a baroque edifice of adolescent male fantasies"—the author demonstrates genuine sympathy for these bearers of technohistorical change. His concluding discussion of "weather citizenship" and the Weather Channel is sufficiently brilliant to overcome skepticism of his claim that "the way in which we talk about weather patterns of change and repetition is fundamentally linked to the dialectic of change and constancy that lies at the heart of a developed capitalist culture." Ross's sharp treatment of such subacademic topics is characteristic of the new cultural studies. But like many of the humanists he disdains, Ross exaggerates the pervasiveness of technocultural modes of expression. Cyberpunks and hackers are really just so many subcultists; like those that have come before, they seem to revel in the overheated discourse on their social meaning (see such playful hucksters as "Queen Mu" and "R.U. Serius," editors of the new cyberpunk magazine *Mondo 2000*).

The book's ideological trajectory is somewhat vague. "Progressive" may describe Ross's personal politics, but in the context of his relentlessly incisive hermeneutic it stands as a quaint mantra rather than a concrete ideology, although his affinity for a "green" insurgency is evident. Yet while Ross is not responsible for the ideological crisis of the post-Marxist Left, his dismissal of humanism is unsatisfactory in its limited scope. In fairness, one countercultural tradition of great



"Get lost!"

moment to many of my acquaintance—the light-traveling, voluntarily poor hipster swinging to the mystical rhythms of jazz and Beat literature—was dispatched to a position of cultural marginality in Ross's previous book, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (1989). But there is a richer legacy of spiritual humanism too important to be brushed aside, as he does in writing of New Age: "Without any alternative [Left] politics of social individualism it is no surprise to find that people will opt for spiritualist solutions for problems encountered in a materialistic culture." Ross views fundamentalism and "noninstitutional cults" as inevitable symptoms of "the bankrupt cultures of state socialist, capitalist, and scientific materialism," but ignores the persistent mysticism and theologizing in many works of contemporary "science fiction," including the towering example of the late Philip K. Dick (author of *The Divine Invasion*, Vintage, 1991), whose absence from this study is incomprehensible.

Works like *Strange Weather* have a depressing tendency to make a reader sheepish for raising questions about technology and personhood that are regarded as mere atavisms by most cultural critics. Yet I will at least suggest the possibility that Dorothy Day, for one, had transcended Left cultural politics when she wrote, in 1946: "We are anxious to talk about machines that turn men into machines, about decentralization, about striking at the roots." Though religious radicalism is surely part of the cultural processes Ross describes, it also points to a more truly global consciousness than "progressive citizenship" has dared envision. In this respect *Strange Weather* attests to a continuing gulf, not between science and the humanities but between ways of imagining our common destiny. ❑

REVIEWERS

MOLLY FINN, *a New Yorker, is the author of three cookbooks. A musician, she sings with* Amici Musicale. *When not singing, or cooking she's reading.*

DAVID CALLAHAN *is author of* Dangerous Capabilities: Paul Nitze and the Cold War. *He is currently completing a book about the Persian Gulf War and the future of American foreign policy.*

RICHARD BLAKE *is the movie reviewer for* America *magazine. He teaches at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York.*

JAMES T. FISHER *teaches in the American Studies department at Yale University and is the author of* Catholic Counter Culture in America, 1933-1962 *(University of North Carolina).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of dandies & pilgrims

Lawrence S. Cunningham

1991 marked the fourth centenary of the death of the great Spanish mystic and poet, John of the Cross. To celebrate that event, Kieran Kavanaugh, the distinguished translator and Sanjuanista scholar, has provided an English translation of a Spanish/Italian collaborative biography of St. John complete with 800 sumptuous illustrations, maps, and excerpts of texts relating to the saint's life. Attractively boxed features within the text give us the flavor of the towns, convents, and universities with which the saint was associated. The end product is an authoritative study of St. John and a sumptuous feast for the eyes in the bargain.

Readers unfamiliar with the Institute of Carmelite Studies (ICS) may wish to know of their splendid publishing program. In addition to the work under review, they have produced careful translations of the great Carmelite writers (Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Edith Stein, etc.) at exceedingly reasonable prices. One may purchase, for example, the complete works of John of the Cross in one volume for just under $9.

God Speaks in the Night: The Life, Times, and Teaching of St. John of the Cross, *translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., ICS Publications, $29.35, 384 pp.*

John Gray (1866-1934), born into the working class in London, managed, while barely out of his teens, to achieve a fairly decent literary education (self-taught) and to associate himself, through dint of hard work, chance meetings, and some luck, into the circle of poets who in the 1880s and 1890s were known as the Decadents. This was the roaring age of Oscar Wilde (Gray is thought, with good reason, to be the inspiration for Wilde's fictional character, Dorian Gray), Aubrey Beardsley, Walter Pater, and a bevy of other "aesthetes" who produced a fair mountain of slim, elegant volumes of poetry with much of it inspired by the Symbolists in France, and not an insignificant amount of it redolent of "Uranian" (read: homosexual) sensibilities. The air was filled with Verlaine, Baudelaire, and the odor of green carnations.

A fair number of these artists, among them John Gray, became Catholics or at least seriously flirted with the church. The attractive pull of Catholicism was mainly aesthetic as the poet Lionel Johnson, himself later to convert, would attest: "White tapers upon the altar, an ascetic and beautiful priest, the great gilt monstrance, the subtle-scented and mystical incense, the old world accents of the Vulgate...the splendor of sacred vestments!" And, he added, with just a touch of malice, plenty of French sonnets in the head should the sermon be dull.

Gray eventually detached himself from his poetic circle and, taking his conversion rather seriously, went to Rome, enrolled at the Scots College (a decade earlier it had, as a seminarian, the rather loony Frederick Rolfe, aka Baron Corvo, who had to be pitched out bodily on the street), was ordained a priest in 1901, and returned to Edinburgh where he served as a parish priest until his death. His only true link with his earlier days was his lifelong friendship with an enormously wealthy Russian-born French Jew, Andre Raffalovich, who, also a convert, was his benefactor and spiritual friend. Raffalovich would finance the building of the church of St. Peter which Gray would pastor until his death in 1934.

John Gray: Poet, Dandy & Priest, *by Jerusha Hull McCormack, University Press of New England, $35, 319 pp.*

McCormack's book is a thoroughly researched and delightfully written study of the man, his poetry, and his circle. Even after the Edwardian dandy had transformed himself into the redoubtable Canon Gray of Edinburgh, he kept up his literary interests (he wrote and translated religious poetry) and maintained contacts with figures as diverse as Ezra Pound, Henry James, John Masefield, and the "Catholic culture" crowd of Eric Gill, Bede Jarrett, and Hilary Pepler. His priestly years were spent in devoted parochial work, the occasional essay and translation, a few devotional poems, and his hobby of hiking which prompted articles on his excursions for *Blackfriars*. The only lingering affectation from the 1890s was his penchant for black linen bedding and his continued interest in poetry.

The Oxford "Past Masters" series provides us with short interpretative studies of figures from the past who still influence our thinking today. McConica's study of Erasmus of Rotterdam reflects well the merits of the series. In just over a hundred pages we follow the main stages of Erasmus's career while a clear case is made for the pertinence of his intellectual labors and judgments are rendered about the sig-

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *chairs the Theology Department at the University of Notre Dame.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nificance of his most important books. While not a substitute for the standard biographies of Huizinga, Bainton, and Phillips, this is certainly as good a brief introduction as one could hope for.

Erasmus, *by James McConica, Oxford, $6.95, 106 pp.*

The old cliché has it that Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched. It is true that both men directed their hatred (and vitriol) at the same targets: monasticism, the mendicant orders, late medieval popular devotions, and scholastic theology just as they shared a common love for biblical studies and patristic literature. Where they differed, and the difference was a chasm, was over the issue of how the Christian life was to be lived and how salvation was obtained. To put the matter somewhat simplistically: Luther believed in the unmerited grace of God in Christ while Erasmus believed in the philosophy of Christ retrievable through philology broadly understood. It should not surprise us that Luther grumbled about the Erasmian penchant for the writings of Jerome at the expense of sympathy for Augustine. To the Lutheran dialectic of sin and salvation, Erasmus proffered the presence of the Logos in creation, history, and humanity.

Erasmus can lay fair claim to be a primary inspiration behind the great sixteenth century retrieval of the Bible in the vernacular just as he can be crowned as a supreme theorist of humanist educational reform. His books were wildly popular in their own day with some of them running through many editions and enjoying wide translation. While he had little patience for liturgical or sacramental theology, his piety was genuine and some of his prayers still inspire and edify.

McConica also notes that Erasmus made a notable effort at ecumenism as he tried mightily to heal the breach between Luther and Rome. Erasmus held a strong view of the Christian tradition and made a trenchant argument for seeking consensus on the essentials of that tradition while permitting discussion on that which was disputed. His voice was not to be heard (his acid pen and wicked satirical gifts hardly left him in a disinterested position) but there is something terribly plaintive in his 1523 cry that true religion *est pax et unanimitas* (is peace and consensus). Alas, it was not to be.

Jean Vanier is one of the more illustrious figures of the contemporary church. Born (1928) into an illustrious family of Canadian diplomats, Vanier's life evolved from a naval career into a spiritual search which brought him into contact with the ferment of pre-Vatican II Catholic renewal. Connected to the French movement *Eau Vive*, Vanier spent time in a Trappist monastery and earned a doctorate in ethics from the Institut Catholique in Paris. In 1964, encouraged by his friend and spiritual director, Père Philippe, Vanier began to live with severely handicapped people in a community setting to which he gave the name L'Arche (The Ark). Today, there are nearly ninety such houses, spread all over Europe, the Americas, Africa, India, and the Middle East, where "assistants" live with persons suffering from deep physical and mental handicaps.

As Spink makes clear in this popular biography, Vanier is motivated by a New Testament vision of living in communion with those who are often the most marginalized. Inspired by the gospel vision of love, sacrificial poverty, sharing, and community, the L'Arche communities attempt a new form of Christian living somewhere in the interstices between a religious order and a commune. She also makes clear that these experiments in Christian living have not always been perfect; their very nature uncovers problems that range from the simple issue of sexuality to the inevitable tensions between professionalization and simple apostolic witness.

While most people will read this work to learn of the life of this exemplary Christian, my own interest (as a theologian) in Vanier's life arises out of his struggle to imagine and live a new form of Christian community which is not precisely a religious order (although the L'Arche communities are influenced by the regular life) nor a simple intentional community. Their stumbling efforts to solve problems concerning the Eucharist in communities where not all are Roman Catholic or even Christian; their attempts to integrate married folks as assistants (and the larger issue of celibacy/sexuality); the tension between contemplative urges and the sheer energy required to live with people needing constant care and love; the practical issue of balancing a life of poverty with the material requirements of the community—all of these issues point to struggles common to every attempt to create post-modern intentional Christian communities.

Jean Vanier & L'Arche: A Communion of Love, *by Kathryn Spink, Crossroad, $10.95, 211 pp.*

I am grateful for Spink's sympathetic portrait of Jean Vanier just as we are goaded to think more on, and pay attention to, the experiments in love and service that he, and many others in the church, are attempting to incarnate.

The study of pilgrimage has become a growth industry in academe. A number of books have come across my desk in recent years and a few have been mentioned in this column. This latest one is a collection of essays designed, at least in part, to take issue with the theories of the anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner and, to a lesser degree, the work of the phenomenologist, Mircea Eliade. Pilgrimage does not result, *pace* the Turners, in a sense of communitas nor does the pilgrimage location, *pace* Eliade, always consist of dwelling in a sacred space homologized as an axis between heaven and earth. The authors of this volume insist that the matter is more complex with a good deal of the complexity orbiting around social status, power relationships, and varied perceptions of the sacred.

I will leave it to the theoreticians to decide how valid these rereadings are. For me, what was far more interesting (but not worth the price of this thin, cheaply printed, volume) was the descriptive work of the writers, all of whom, in good anthropological fashion, were out in the field, notebook and tape recorder in hand.

Thus, one study of the Lourdes pilgrim-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

age from the perspective of the sick who come to Lourdes was illuminating on the dialectical tension between those who hoped for miracles and those who run Lourdes. Similarly, John Eade's study of the *brancadiers* (lay helpers) at Lourdes deftly compares their almost militaristic

Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage, *edited by John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, Routledge, $49.95, 158 pp.*

organizing strategies with the more compliant pilgrims who are herded about. He also slyly notes the paradox of a shrine devoted to two women (Mary and Bernadette) totally in the hands of a male dominated sodality, albeit a lay one.

An essay on the tension between the town folks and the friars who run a vast pilgrimage site in honor of the late Padre Pio was extremely well done, while a study of contemporary pilgrimage attitudes among Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants in the Holy Land struck me as somewhat glibly generalized. Essays on Catholic pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka and the Andes, the latter quite good, round out the volume.

Mercifully—and one cannot always count on this when reading academic social scientists—the writers provide a clear descriptive account of their designated pilgrimage sites. Again, mercifully, they do not often stray into theology. I say "mercifully" because the one sustained example of such an excursion (on the "bodily" in Catholicism) was a farrago of banalities, errors, and generalizations. This anthology, might be a useful work to consult in an academic library but only the most dedicated, I suspect, would be tempted to buy it.

Liberation theologians have been passionately interested in "popular" religion, if only because so much of Latin American Catholicism has been shaped by it. Recent official documents from Rome, Puebla, and Medellin have taken account of this folk piety. Theologians, however, have been of two minds. Some (e.g., Juan Luis Segundo) have seen it as a deadening impediment to a truly liberating Christianity while others have asked for a deepened analysis of such piety and an appreciation of its liberating potential. Gilbert Romero would number himself among the latter as his book on *religiosidad popular* makes clear.

Father Romero is a biblical scholar. He looks at four popular expressions of Hispanic piety (Ash Wednesday; the *Quinceanera* celebration for young women; home altars; and the fraternity of the *Penitentes*) against the background of biblical motifs, especially as they derive from the Old Testament, which is his particular field of expertise. The result is a work which takes account both of history/phenomenology/ethnography and biblical studies.

Hispanic Devotional Piety: Tracing the Biblical Roots, *by C. Gilbert Romero, Orbis, $16.95, 140 pp.*

I found Romero's book oddly off balance. He tells me much, for example, about the symbolism of ashes and penitence in the Bible but leaves me in the dark as to why so many people (it is hardly a Hispanic phenomenon) flock to church for ashes at the beginning of Lent. Similarly, it is obvious that a ceremony celebrating the fifteenth birthday of a young woman is a rite of passage with many biblical analogues but he offers little about the specific origins of the ceremony; how widespread it is in Hispanic lands; why it is not common in other Mediterranean cultures, etc. Finally, I found it odd that in his discussion of the *Penitentes* he had nothing to say about the source of the affective historicizing of Christ's passion as a result of the kind of piety inspired by Francis of Assisi and the subsequent Franciscan charism. That would have been a much more fruitful source to meditate upon than the rather labored reflection he offers contrasting Job and Qoheleth's views on suffering. Nonetheless, I did learn a good deal from Romero (especially from the footnotes) about the hermeneutical discussions about popular piety—a subject which interests me a good deal—and for that I am appreciative. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

much that now exists inside that tradition but originally came from elsewhere.

The same applies to Father Joseph A. Komonchak's wonderful essay on Henri de Lubac. The effort to go behind Aristotelian Thomism to the "great tradition," the "thought of the first millennium," is important; but even if we carry out such a program, we do not thereby avoid using a language that originated outside Catholicism. Virtually all the technical language of patristics is of Greek philosophical origin (or Latin translations of it).

Nor does the effort to go back to a biblical language help us much. We know that biblical language contains images, ideas, phrases, and concepts from Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and other ancient Near Eastern cultures. In fact, at no point in the history of the development of biblical tradition is there a time when the "great tradition" was not appropriating material from its surrounding culture.

Where does this leave us? Surely, where we have always been: with the responsibility to test new formulations, to see if they make sense of our religious experience, if they are in accord with our reasoned thought about God and the world, if they are consonant with (not identical to) the formulations of Scripture and tradition, if they bring new light to our understanding. Reasonable people will differ, and (as we should know from study of past theological conflicts) there is probably no way to arrive at a definitive answer without the passage of time.

Thanks again for one of the best issues of theological reflection that I have ever seen. DONALD KRAUS

The writer is a senior editor with Oxford University Press.

Christiane, catechist

Charleston, W. Va.

To the Editors: O, bless you and James Parker for the consoling, splendid memorial to Christiane Brusselmans ["The Mother of Christian Initiation," January 31]. Christiane was a big part of my life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in CCD days in Washington, D.C. While she was doing theology at Catholic University and teaching at Trinity, she brought some students to help prepare my fourth-grade class for the Eucharist. Nothing was half-measure for her. She and her artist-roommate, Ellie Landreau (Pavlov), stayed up more than one night preparing pictures, songs, vestments for those astonished little black catechumens. Her blue eyes, rosy cheeks, glorious smile, and "alien talk" had us all enthralled.

Christiane traveled with many books and few personal things. I saw her last about two years ago. In the midst of an ice storm, she appeared at my door, dressed in tennis shoes, raincoat, no hat or gloves. I thawed her out and phoned a colleague of hers to come fetch her, bringing boots, etc., to deliver her to a conference in Brookland.

Christiane was full of miracles. She managed to get to Maine to say goodby to Ellie, who died too young a year ago. Now the weight of glory is on the other side. I think of her meeting with her dear parents, the likes of Thomas Merton, Ellie, so many others.

Elinor Briefs, poet-hermit, who lives above the Shenandoah and Berryville Trappists, and who often gave rest and rescue to Christiane, had the *mot juste*: No one is as *free* as Christiane. It was and is the "glorious freedom of the children of God."

Grieving with certainty of hope and faith, I will remember her joyous voice on the phone from the airport: *"Katrin, c'est Christiane!"*

CATHERINE CLARKSON

Christiane, counselor

Boston, Mass.

To the Editors: Thank you for publishing James Parker's tribute to Christiane Brusselmans, my teacher, godmother, and friend, whose memory is blessed and whose life work is cherished by Christians around the world. For the sake of historical accuracy, I must offer some corrections to Mr. Parker's moving essay. First, when Christiane met me and initiated the catechumenate to which the article refers, I was not a "Harvard undergraduate" but a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School, where Christiane was a visiting professor. Second, our RCIA process did not last three years but about six months; we met in the fall and I was received into the church at Easter. Third, I did not "ask Christiane to help me enter the church" but rather shared with her a journey of several years and the decision I had already made and to which I had not yet given shape, delaying my entrance into the church while I wrestled with questions related to the role of women in the church and with my own ministerial vocation. It is a testimony to Christiane's pastoral gifts and sensitivity that she worked with me in a way that both respected the path I had already traveled and revitalized an ancient tradition to welcome me into the Catholic Christian family.

The news of Christiane's death came to me the night I was sitting down to complete the final draft of the last chapter of a book—a chapter on the themes of death, resurrection, and hope. Her death and her struggle with depression will always remain poignantly related in my heart to her belief in the Resurrection, her love of God, and the energetic hope she conveyed to so many of her "children."

JANE REDMONT

CLASSIFIED

RATES: 80¢ a word, one time; 76¢ three times; 72¢ six times; Classified payable with order; monthly in advance for more than three times. COMMONWEAL, 15 Dutch St., NYC 10038.

Biblical Institute

Second Annual Ecumenical Biblical Institute: June 21-26, 1992, Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA. Lecturers: Paul J. Achtemeier, I Peter; Elizabeth Achtemeier, What's the Bible All About; Rev. Frank J. Matera, Gospel of Luke; William L. Holladay, Psalms Through Three Thousand Years. Write: Brother Lewis Mullin, FSC, Director of Biblical Institute, Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA 19010. (215) 688-7610.

WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE

■ You can help millions of families in their daily struggle against hunger and starvation.

■ *Operation Rice Bowl* provides help for people in more than 70 countries.

■ *Operation Rice Bowl* helps impoverished families improve their health.

The Global Family in Harmony with Creation

■ *Operation Rice Bowl* is the national Lenten campaign of Catholic Relief Services, the overseas relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

■ Your Lenten prayers, fasting and almsgiving will help fill a rice bowl and feed the world.

For more information about OPERATION RICE BOWL contact your parish priest or call Catholic Relief Services.

OPERATION RICE BOWL

CRS Catholic Relief Services – USCC/209 W. Fayette Street/Baltimore, MD 21201/410-625-2220
The Overseas Relief and Development Agency of the United States Catholic Conference

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038

Trial subscription offer: 11 issues for $12.

Name_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip_____

☐ **I prefer a full year's subscription at $36.**

2/28/92

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED